MUSLIM
BENGALI LITERATURE

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Translated from the author's original
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"Muslim Bangla Sahitya"

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PREFACE

The literary aspect of our national culture which I have tried to project in this volume, lay buried for a long time in obscurity. Though from time to time some stray scholars revealed a few glimpses of it to our eyes through their illuminating research, the grand edifice had not yet come to full view.

I have tried to place an earthen lamp at its doorway. It is my wish that any one, who falters towards it, may at least find a way to step into the winding galleries of our literary heritage. It would be vain to think that I could illuminate the entire structure with my present rushlight. It should require another two decades to do so.

The well-known scholar, late Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad is the foremost, if not the only original source, from whom I have borrowed the material for my compilation. How very pleased he would have been to see this earthen lamp lit by light borrowed from him. As I visualize the deep pleasure, he would have felt, with tears in my eyes, I pray for the peace of his soul.

In this connection, I would like to thank my friend Mr. Abdul Qadir, without whose constant persuasion, perhaps I should have been very reluctant to undertake this task. I am happy indeed that I have been able to offer this humble work to those interested in the subject, for their discernment and judgement.

Chittagong College,
Chittagong.
February, 1955.

Muhammad Enamul Haq.

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FIRST PART

Pre-Turkish Period

From Pre-Historic Age upto 1200 A.D.

CHAPTER I

Bengal and the Muslims

The land of Bengal traces its history back to about 3,000 B.C. In the *Aitareya Aranyak*, a part of the *Rig Veda*, this country has been referred to as Vanga. From that era upto the 7th century A.D., ancient Bengal was split up into several tribal tracts, such as *Vanga*, *Pundra*, *Gauda*, *Rarha*, *Summa*, *Brahma*, *Tamralipti* and *Samatata*. In the 7th century A.D., king Shashanka tried to unite these zones into a single unit, called *Gauda*. From this time the three tribal areas — *Pundra*, *Gauda* and *Vanga*, became synonymous with Bengal. It is almost a universally admitted fact that these tribal zones were not united into a single unit named *Vagna*, during the Hindu period. This only happened during the Muslim rule.

The process of unification was started during the Turkish rule in Bengal; it was successfully completed during the reign of Akbar, in the Mughal period. In Akbar's reign the whole of Bengal came to be known as *Subah-i-Bangalah*. Its huge area, which included Bihar and Orissa, was reduced during the British rule and the boundaries of Bengal were more firmly defined. The credit of unifying Bengal, however, goes mainly to the Muslims.

In this connection, we may attempt to trace the origin of the word *Bangla*. From the pre-historic era upto the reign of king Shashanka (7th Century A.D.), Bengal was divided into several tribal areas—Vanga, Gauda, Pundra and others. There is

ample evidence in Sanskrit literature that most of these names were indicative of different racial groups rather than geographical areas. In Sanskrit books, such plural terms as *Vangah*, *Gaudah*, *Rarhah* and *Pundrah*, significant of groups of people, have often been used to denote geographical territories. It is commonly admitted that the word *Vangah* stands for "Banga Jana" (the Bengalees), and that the word Gaudah stands for "Gauda Jana" (the people of Gauda). It follows that the place where the *Bang* tribe used to live was known by that name. But the Sanskrit word Vanga, originally stood for the tribe *Bang*.

The words 'Bangla' and 'Bangala' have originated from the same tribal name. The derivation of the word given by Abul Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* may be taken as correct and reasonable. According to him, the word *Bang* in combination with the word "al" created the word Bangal (*al* is derived from the Sanskrit word "ali" which is still current in East Bengal in the form of 'ail'). Bangal then became *Bangalah* in Persian (c.f. Mulk-i-Bangalah), and finally changed into Bangla, in common usage. It means the homeland of the *Bang* tribe, demarcated by "al"—Sanskrit "ali" (an earthen dam round cultivated land). Archaeological research has finally proved that this homeland of the Bang tribe stretched from the eastern coast of the Bhagirathi (the branch of the Ganges which used to run across Bengal), to the western border of Assam. This vast stretch of land has gradually dwindled in size and now forms the present East Bengal or *East Pakistan*.

The basic structure of the Bengali language as also the ethnology of the people, was already established in the long

period stretching from the pre-historic times upto the Muslim conquest of Bengal. Bengal was then a vast country and its area stretched from the western border of Arakan and the foot of the Himalayas in the north to the sea coast in the South.

Modern ethnological research has proved that in the pre-historic period the inhabitants of this vast area consisted of a mixed group of the Proto-Australoid and the Alpinus races.

In the same pre-historic era, Mongolian blood got mixed up with the two blood-groups named above. The Coches, Palias, Rajbanshis, Chakmas, and Jumias of Bengal, all belong to the Mongolian group. There are still a number of them in Bengal.

From the 8th century A.D., the blood of a new race began to be mixed up with the Bengali blood: the people of the Semitic race began to enter Bengal from that date. The recent discovery of a coin of Caliph Harun-al-Rashid (786—809) in Paharpur, (Rajshahi), has established the fact that the Semitic Arabs were preaching their religion as well as carrying on business in this country; they had also established a small principality in Chittagong under an Amir. Several saints, like Sultan Ba Yazid Bistami (874 A.D.), Mir Sayyid Sultan Mahmud Mahi Sawar (1047 A.D.), Shah Muhammad Sultan Rumi (1053 A.D.), Baba Adam Shahid (1119 A.D.), and Shah Niamat Ullah Butshikan, were preaching Islam in Bengal during the period of early Muslim settlement here.

Following in the footsteps of the semitic race, the Negroes of Africa entered this country. In the fifteenth century A.D., several Negro Sultans ruled over Bengal. Of course the custom of engaging Negro guards in imitation of a similar custom in

Delhi and Agra, became prevalent in this country as well. Thus the Negrite blood got mixed up with Bengali blood. As a result, sometimes we notice among the Bengalees jet black, flat nosed, curly haired and thick-lipped people; they remind us of this transfusion.

Leaving aside ethnological terms, we may simply admit that a modern Bengali has in him the blood of the non-Aryans, Aryans, Mongolians, the Semitic people, the Negroes and a few other races. The language of this peculiarly mixed group of people is Bengali or Bangla.

CHAPTER II

The Bengali Language

We have seen that the Bengalees are a mixed race. They speak and write a language whose modern name is Bengali. Just as researches carried out about the modern Bengali people have revealed their origin, so a scientific analysis of the modern Bengali language establishes its origin and nature. As a result, we have come to the conclusion that like their blood, the language of the Bengalees is also an admixture of several languages. Though a weighty direct evidence is lacking, there are still enough indirect premises on which we can base our conclusions regarding the type of language spoken in Bengal before the Bengali language was ever spoken or written.

In *Aryamanjushri-Mulakalpa*, a Sanskrit book written in the 8th century A.D., it is stated that the people of Gauda and Pundra speak the language of the *Asuras*. During that period Gauda consisted of East, West and Southern Bengal and Pundra of North Bengal and North-West Assam. Therefore, the people who spoke the *Asura* language, lived in Assam and ancient Bengal. "*Asura*" is still one of the dialects of the uncivilized Kolas, Mundas and such other races. *Asura* is, therefore, an Austric language; and it is evident that the Asura language or an Austric language was the common language of Bengal before Bengali established itself. Some of the Asura words still in use in the Bengali language are given below :

Modern Bengali	*Austric Variations*
Kudi (meaning Twenty)	Dravidian—Kudi.
Pan (meaning Four)	Santal—Upun, pun or pan.
Ganda (meaning Four)	Dravidian—Ganda.
Vanga (name of country)	Dravidian—Bang (name of a tribe).
Dhenki (the husking pedal)	Munda—Dhenki.
Mota (fat)	Munda—Moto.
Da or daha—Jhinaida, Banshda.	Kola—Da or Dok (water).
Kapotaksha (name of a river)	Kola—Kabadak (Sanskrit—Kapotaksh).
Damodar (name of a river).	Kola—Damdak.
Pond (the title of a low-caste Hindu).	Dravidian—Pundra.

Besides, a few peculiarities of speech, like counting by fours and twenties; some onomatopoetic expressions, such as Jhan-Jhan; khan-khan, and grammatical peculiarities, like the use of the same word in different senses, indicate non-Aryan traits in the Bengali language.

Again, it may be interesting to note that the number of Arabic, Persian, Portuguese and English words in Bengali is quite considerable, and that the words of pure Sanskrit origin are not more than 25 to 30 per cent. The rest are either *Prakrit* or *Apabhransha*. It is not easy to ascertain what the *Asura* language of ancient Bengal was like and how it practically disappeared from modern Bengali; but we can make a few guesses.

A stone-inscription of Mahasthan in Bogra is the only example of the Aryan language of ancient Bengal, which has a close affinity to ancient Magadhi or Eastern Prakrit. The ancient Aryan colloquial language is Prakrit; it later on divided itself into several languages. The form that it took in ancient Magadha is known as Eastern Prakrit. The language which Dandi has characterised as Gaudi Prakrit is nothing but the eastern-most variety of the same Eastern Prakrit. Linguists have conclusively proved that modern Bengali is a modified form of Magadhi Prakrit, hence of Gaudi Prakrit. That it is not directly derived from Sanskrit is beyond doubt.

The Bengali language has, therefore, originated from the eastern variety of the same Prakrit from which sprang up Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, and other languages of the northern and western areas of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

CHAPTER III

The Earliest Specimens of the Bengali Language

It is needless to surmise the date when the Bengali language was born, for a language evolves gradually over a long period of time. Bengali assumed some settled characteristics during the period extending from the ninth century A.D., to the twelfth century A.D. These four hundred years may be called the period of "incubation". Two other languages besides Sanskrit were prevalent at the beginning of that period—one of them was Sauraseni *Prakrit* or Sauraseni *Apabhransa*; the other was Magadhi *Prakrit* or Magadhi *Apabhransa*. The Bengali language has evolved out of the same Magadhi Apabhransa. We have only one specimen of the formative period of the Bengali language. It is known as "Charyacharya-Vinishchaya". It tells us the rules of behaviour that one should follow in life. It is an anthology of songs numbering about forty-six.

Linguistic investigations have conclusively proved that these songs belong to the formative period of the language. Their grammar and manner of expression are typically Bengali; the same grammatical rules and manner of expression are also a part of modern Bengali. Some of the proverbs used in the songs are also still current. Besides, the images of rivers, boats, ferries and ferry-men are native to Bengal—the land of rivers. It is not difficult to guess that most of the songs were composed by Bengali *siddhas*. The theme is obviously devotional, but these songs have definitely a great historical value

in the evolution of the language and literature of *Bengal*; they have also a literary value which cannot so easily be ignored. Some of the compositions contain an image that is even now appealing, despite a lapse of nearly a thousand years. Here is a literal translation of one of these songs :

> The *Shavari* girl lives in the high hills;
> She puts on a dress made of peacock feather and wears a *gunja* chain round her neck.
> O thou mad *shavar*, do not make a fuss over her,
> You have a wife who passes for a beauty, known as 'Sahaj.'
> Just look! various trees are in bloom and the heavens are pleased at the sight.
> The *Shavari* girl is roaming alone in this forest, she has *Kundala* and *Vajra* in her ears.
> A bedstead of three metals has been spread, and O thou *shavar*, thou hast spread a bed in joy;
> The *shavar* is like the serpent and *Nairatma* is like his wife; they spent the night in love and joy.

Whatever be the esoteric meaning behind these images, the Shavari girl on the hills resembles the girl of today, living in the hills of North Bengal. As we imagine her in the green background of the blooming forest, we feel that the forest-dwellers look beautiful in the forest, much the same way as a child appears lovelier in the lap of its mother. Other songs of Charyacharya-Vinishchaya are also rich in the same kind of imagery.

Some of the Charya songs depict love-scenes. Love

is always a fascinating theme in literature. Most important, however, is the *musical* element in these compositions. Gunjari, Bangal, Patamanjari, Barari, Deshakh, Dhanashri—these were the few "ragas" from which they derived their tunes. These compositions have an unmistakable appeal for readers and listeners because of their musical tunes. Their significance can be best determined by their influence on the later literature, which has been considerable. They influenced the later literary activities of this country in several ways. They created a literary language for later writers; the language of later literary creations clearly indicates the influence of the language of the *Charya* songs. *Sri-Krishna Kirtan* is alone a proof of this. Had the book not been discovered, it would be impossible to know that the *Charya* songs belonged to the formative period of the Bengali language.

Again, there are some riddles or mysterious statements in the *Charya* songs; these establish their affinity with later Aul, Baul, Murshida and Marefati songs, in which the influence of *Charya* songs can be traced. The Charyas expressed riddles through the medium of songs, and from them started the practice of song-writing in Bengal; the current of lyricism flowing through Vaishava and Sakta song has come down to us in the songs of Tagore and Nazrul Islam.

The influence of Charya songs on the composition of Bengali poems is also very considerable. The *payar* and *lachari* metres of a later period evolved out of the metre used in the *Charya* poems. Moreover, each of these songs has a final alliteration and a Colophon which gives the name of the composer. Before *Gitagovinda*—which was composed long after the *Charyas*—no other poem has these elements. But later all poems contained something of these.

Thus the *Charyas* hold a unique place in the language. Had these poems remained unknown, the Bengali language would have appeared without any definite origin.

SECOND PART

The Turkish Period

(1201-1350)

CHAPTER I

Political Background of the Turkish Period

In 1201 A.D., Hindu administration came to an end in Bengal, giving place to Muslim rule. The first Muslim rulers of this country were of Turkish extraction. Their religion was Islam and culturally they were akin to Persia. In their houses they spoke Turkish; political or state affairs were conducted in Persian, while Arabic served for religious purposes.

Lakshman Sen was the last king of the whole of 'Vanga' if not of Bangla. Poets like Doyi, Jaydeva, Umapati, and scholars like *Halayudha Misra* etc., adorned the court of Lakshman Sen. Lakhnauti or Lakshnavati (situated near the modern Gaud) was his capital. The activities of the great poets and scholars of his court helped the growth of Sanskrit culture and through the "*Gita Gobinda*" of Jaydeva, it spread all over northern India. It is evident, however, that there were no provisions in Bengal for cultural advancement of the Bengali language then. Sanskrit was close to the people of Bengal and in a sense paved the way for the development of Bengali in later days.

In the "SEK SUBHODAYA" which has a colophon of *Halayudha Misra* and was preserved in the mausoleum of Sheikh Jalal-ud-din Tabrezi (1225 A.D.) situated in Pandua (12 miles from Gaud), it is mentioned that the Turks reached the eastern parts of Bihar in 1203 A.D. *i.e.* 1125 of the Shaka calendar. Perhaps it was in the year 1203 A.D., that the great

Turkish warrior, Ikhtiar-ud-din Bakhtiyar Khalji defeated and drove away the Hindu King Lakshman Sen from Lakshnavati, thereby dealing a severe blow to the development of Sanskrit. This opened the way for the growth of Bengali. Afterwards the whole of Northern Bengal passed under the rule of Bakhtiyar.

After the conquest of Northern Bengal by Bakhtiyar, however, descendants of the King Lakshman Sen, held a satellite principality for about 100 years at Vikrampur of East Bengal. Muslim rule went on spreading gradually in Bengal between the next 100 years from 1201 to 1301. Firuz Shah (1301 to 1322) brought Bihar, Lakshnavati, Saptagram and Banga (Sonargaon) or nearly the whole of Bengal and Bihar, under Muslim rule. It was in his time that Generals Nasir-ud-din and Sikandar Ghazi, at the request of Saint Shah Jalal Muzarrad-i-yamani, defeated the Hindu King Gaud Gobinda of Sylhet, extending the Muslim Kingdom of Bengal upto the eastern border of the River Brahmaputra.

Upon the death of Sultan Firuz Shah, a fight ensued among his sons for the throne, lasting till 1328. One of his sons, Nasiruddin Ibrahim proclaimed himself king of Lakshnavati. Another son, Gayas-uddin Bahadur Shah, occupied Sonargaon. Taking advantage of this dynastic war, Gayas-uddin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi, attacked Bengal and subjugated it to Delhi in 1328. For the convenience of administrative control, he divided Bengal in three parts. The capital of Northern Bengal was set up at Lakshnavati and Kedar Khan, alias Malik Pindar Khalji was appointed Governor there. Saptagram was made the capital of West Bengal with Azam-ul-Mulk alias Izz-ud-din Yahya as Governor. Sonargaon was

the capital of East Bengal and Bahram Khan alias Tatar Khan was appointed the Governor of this place.

However, this arrangement soon broke down. This time, Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarak Shah (1338-1349) in East Bengal; Alauddin Ali Shah (1340-1342) in Lakshnavati *i.e.*, in North Bengal; and Shamsuddin Ilyas in Saptagram *i.e.*, in West Bengal, declared themselves independent of the authority in Delhi. War broke out again. In the race for supremacy Ilyas Shah attacked Northern Bengal and defeated, disgraced and killed Ali Shah (1342). He then conquered Orissa and Trihut and East Bengal. The powerful Sultan, Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah died and his son Ikhtiyarud-Din Ghazi Shah ascended his father's throne in Sonargaon (1349). Till then Iliyas Shah had not dared to attack East Bengal. In 1352, Ghazi Shah suddenly died and Sonargaon was left without a strong ruler. Ilyas Shah took this opportunity to attack this territory spreading over the Eastern and Southern Bengal and occupied it.

In this manner, Iliyas Shah established his supremacy over the whole of Bihar and Orissa in the west, the whole of Northern Bengal in the North and the whole of East Bengal in the East. In short, about the middle of the fourteenth century, the bigger Bengal came under the rule of Ilyas Shah. This was the beginning of inedependent Muslim rule in Bengal. Its subsequent history will be discussed later on. Cultural history is deeply influenced by political history, but it is a slower and gradual evolutionary process, and may sometimes be related to political upheaval.

The Turkish period of Bengal's history was full of wars. Being far away from Delhi, the Governors of Bengal seized upon

every opportunity of revolting against the centre. Sometimes they introduced their own currency, built new mosques, where they had the Khutba read in their names. The Sultan of Delhi had often to quell rebellion. Bengal had gained such notoriety in the Imperial Court of Delhi, that its capital was often referred to as the "Home of Rebels."

Thus there was no peace in Bengal during the 150 years of Turkish rule. The Islamic Society was just trying to establish itself firmly in Bengal and its full impact was not yet felt in literature.

CHAPTER II

The Formative Period of Islamic Atmosphere

During the one hundred and fifty years of Turkish rule (1201—1350) in spite of intermittent disturbances, an Islamic atmosphere was created with the rise of Muslim power. Long before the Turks had arrived, however, Bengal had already become acquainted with Islam, through trade, as well as through the preachings of *darwishes* (saints and divines). The advent of the Turks naturally strengthened the position of Islam. If we want to know the role of the Muslims in the realm of Bengali literature, we should know the method by which Islam became a strong force in the whole life of the people whom it influenced. Thus alone can we have a proper idea of Muslim contribution to Bengali literature, which began to grow along with the gradual spread of Islam. The Turks not only fought and conquered countries, they also brought a more advanced culture and civilization based on the teachings and precepts of Islam, which influenced not only the Muslims but also non-Muslims.

One example of a literary production of this period is worth mentioning: it is a poem in *Shunaya Puran* entitled "*Niranjaner Rushma*" written by Ramai Pandit. There are differences of opinion regarding the exact date of Ramai Pundit's advent and literary production, but it is admitted by a few critics that his earliest writings belong to the 13th or the 14th century.

From internal evidences, too, it is clear that "Niranjaner Rushma" was composed after the Turkish conquest of Bengal—some time in the first quarter of the 13th Century. Though its language was modified by later transcribers, it still retains its peculiar flavour. It describes the oppression of the Saddharmi Buddhists by the Brahmins of Jajpur, Orissa and Malda, and also gives us an imaginary picture of the overnight conversion of the Hindu gods and goddesses into Muslim saints and prophets. This picture is very immaturely conceived, and therefore, it proves the incomplete acquintance of the Hindus and the Buddhists with the Muslims and their religion. This also proves that it was composed in the early Islamic period of this country. As it gives us an idea of the formation of Islamic atmosphere in this country, we are quoting the first part of the poem.

"There are sixteen hundred Vedic Brahmins in Jajpur (Orissa). They put their nagun (navagun: paita) on their ears and go from door to door begging alms, and they curse him who does not give any and destroy his house and family by their curse. They do not make any distinction between relations and other men in Malda and impose taxes on everyone; there is no end to their knavery. They have become very powerful; they are collectively destroying the Saddharmi people. They recite the Vedas, fire comes out of their mouths, everyone is afraid of this. Everyone understands its meaning and prays: 'O Dharma, save us; no one else can save us now.' The Brahmins began to destory creation; what a terrible tyranny."

The Islamic atmosphere portrayed in these lines indicates,

though somewhat vaguely, the custom and manners of the Turkish Muslims. Because of the oppression of the Brahmins, the Saddharmi Buddhists had become disturbed and agitated. It is beyond any doubt that they had surely felt relieved by being freed from the tyranny of the Brahmins and by receiving the beneficial influence of the humanitarian aspects of Islam from the Turks. Therefore they, wished the destruction of the Brahmins and welcomed the Muslim rule of Bengal with joy.

This growth of Islamic atmosphere is due to several factors. As soon as the rule of the Brahmins ended and Turkish rule was established, Brahminical influence began to wane. Islam filled the gap and occupied the place so long held by Brahminical Hinduism. Bakhtiar and his subordinate Amirs used to build mosques and make the 'Moulvis' read 'Khutbas' in their names on Fridays. This, and the establishment of Madrasahs and Khanqahs where dervishes used to stay, helped the spread of Islam in this country.

The predominance of Islam, established during Bakhtiar's rule, was retained in later years. His successor Ghyasuddin Yawaz-(1213—1224) followed him and built mosques and gave pensions to Sayyids, Ulamas, divines and saints, and thereby helped propagation of Islam in the whole of Bengal.

About the year 1200 A.D., Makhdum Jalaluddin Tabrizi started missionary work in Bengal. When he came to Pandua, Lakshman Sen was on the throne of Gaud. Pandit Halayudha Mishra, the court Pandit, and even the king himself were amazed to see his miracles and they showed great respect to him. This saint built a mosque at Pandua and grew a garden and built a Khanqah. Every day, thousands of

poor people and travellers used to get food at this Khanqah. *Sheikh Shubhodaya*, a poem written in this period records his miracles and his achievements as a preacher of Islam. The colophons at the end of every chapter of this book suggest that Pandit Halayudha Mishra was its composer.

This saint is by no means related to Shah Jalal Mujarrad-i-Yamani, who conquered Sylhet in 1303 with the help of Sikander Ghazi, the Commander-in-Chief of Firuz Shah Dehlavi of Bengal (1311—1322). During his travel through Sylhet in 1345—46 Ibn Batuta met Shah Jalal. When he reached China in 1347, he heard that Shah Jalal had died. Batuta describes him as a thin, tall man, always engaged in prayer and devotion in one of the caves of the hills. He used to fast for ten days and break his fast on the eleventh day with the milk of a cow which was his only property. Due to his influence a large number of local people embraced Islam. Even now the people of Sylhet remember him in songs.

The work done by Shah Jalal Tabrizi (d. 1225) and Shah Jalal Jujarrad-i-Yamani (d. 1347) was supplemented by the work of a large number of other saints. Of them the most famous are: Ghazi Mulk Ikram Khan who came to Bengal in 1214 A.D., and was buried in Paril; he flourished in Manikganj area in Dacca, Abdullah Kirmani of Khustigiri area in Birbhum —the disciple of Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti (1144—1236); Makhdum Shah Mahmud Ghaznavi known as Rahi Pir who came in 1202 to Mangalkot area in Burdwan; Shah Safiuddin Shahid who died in the last decade of the Thirteenth century, and was buried in Chota Pandua; he flourished in Tribeni area in Saptagram; Badruddin Allama known as Badar Shah

who flourished during the reign of Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (1338—1349) in Chittagong district; Makhdum Shah Daula (alive in 1250 A.D.) of Bogra and Pabna districts; Sayyid Abbas Ali Makki known as Peer Gorachand (alive in 1323 A.D.) of Balanda area of 24-Parganas; and most famous of all, the unique "Muhaqqiq" of the Religion-Maulana Ata who preached Islam in Dinajpur district in between 1300 and 1350.

In order to appreciate the strength and sincerity of their preachings it is necessary to look back on the history of this period. Let us take the case of Gaud or Laksmanavati in 1281. It was then a stronghold of the Indian Qalandaria sect of influential dervishes; it is said that the chief of this sect advised Sultan Ghayasuddin Tughral (1268—1281) to rebel against Delhi. The Sultan presented these dervishes with three maunds of gold. The members of this sect used to wear iron bangles on their hands and feet; when they received this gold they began to wear golden bangles. After the defeat of Tughral, the chief of this sect was sentenced to death. But this sect could not be extirpated.

We should read Ibn Batuta's account in order to appreciate the importance of this event. He says that the dervishes used to enjoy a large number of privileges during the reign of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah. They used to travel by boat freely and when they would reach the town they would be greeted and honoured by presents of half a dinar. The Sultan used to trust them so much so that he placed a dervish named Shaida in charge of Satkaon (Chittagong). This Shaida became a rebel and killed the son of the Sultan. The Sultan came to Chittagong and suppressed this rebellion. Shaida fled to Sonargaon. He was

then captured and killed. He also learnt from other sources that the dervish Badruddin Allama or Badar Peer sent Kadal Khan, a General of Sultan Fakhruddin, to conquer Chittagong. We can now-a-days appreciate the influence of this Badar Peer on the whole of East Bengal. Even now the boatmen of East Bengal ask his help when they are about to cross a river in storm and shout: "Allah, Nabi, Panch Peer, Badar, Badar."

Muslim culture thus spread far and wide in Bengal. The pious examples of the dervishes attracted many people, who were smarting under the domination of Hindu priests, and when priestdom ended with the end of Hindu rule, they felt relieved. Most of them considered Muslims as their liberators from age-long slavery.

After the Turkish conquest of Bengal, a large number of foreign Muslims began to visit it. Some came to seek their fortune, some for the sake of business, others as refugees driven out of their homes and hearths. Most of the soldiers who entered Bengal with Bakhtiar and his generals did not bring their wives with them or were unmarried. They and other foreign Muslims married in this province and settled down for good, and in due course of time Muslims became a cultural force in Bengal.

CHAPTER III

Bengali Literature during the Turkish Period

We have seen that the propagation of Islamic culture brought about an intellectual renaissance and the Bengalis were undergoing a psychological revolution. They were sandwiched between the impact of two cultural worlds, the new, vigorous Islamic world and the old, falling, dilapidated Hindu traditional world.

None can think of any creative activity in such an atmosphere of transition, though some songs and ballads must have been composed during this age. One of these which has come down to us is *Niranjaner Rushma* by Ramai Pandit, composed in the 13th century.

We have noticed that upto the twelfth century the Bengali language was in a formative stage and in the *Charyapadas* it attained some sort of maturity. It can be easily conjectured that during the Turkish period, the *Apabhransa* moods and patterns of the *Charya* which had typical characteristics of the later Bengali language, were incorporated into its vocabulary. Examples of this mixture are noticeable in the anthology of lyrics called "Prakrit Paingala". This collection was made in the fourteenth century in order to give examples of the variety and characteristics of Prakrit metres. This and similar other anthologies must have been collected in the early Turkish period in Bengal, because the language of the poems has a close affinity to the language of the *Charyapadas*.

One of the pieces is written in the 'Tripadi' metre, and in

the immediately subsequent Bengali literature this metre was commonly used. The Prakrit coating of this Bengali is so transparent that its true characteristics are conspicuous. We can call its language old Bengali rather than Prakrit.

A similar song can be found in *Shekh Shubhodaya*, a Sanskrit book. It is written in mainly Bengali. It records the miracles of Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (d. 1225 A.D.). From its language and from the similarity noticeable between the names mentioned here and the names of some later Muslim Sultans, some scholars have concluded that it was not written by Halayudha Mishra. But I have accepted the colophon as significant and therefore, I do not think that it is a later composition. Of course, I admit that Muslim copyists might have changed the language with interpolations. Hence, *Shekh Subhodaya* must be admitted to have been composed in the early 13th century.

Four hundred years before the composition of this book, the Bengalees came into contact with Muslim saints. Therefore, it is not strange to find the glorification of their miracles in this Sanskrit book. Though it is written in Sanskrit it has a distinct place in Bengali literature because of the following reasons:

(1) In the first place, its Sanskrit prose is definitely influenced by the Bengali language of the period.

(2) Secondly, it has in it certain examples of old Bengali. Of them the most important are ballads on Peer's glories or "Arayas," love-songs and the sayings of 'Khana'.

(3) Thirdly, it informs us indirectly of the contribution of the Muslims to Bengali Literature.

Of the three ballads on Peer's glories the first (on p. 12 of the printed book) and the second (on p. 95) are very small, the third (on p. 93-94) is fairly long. These three poems are considered to be the oldest of the discovered ballads of this type of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. The sentiment does not appear unnatural or insincere because they were composed by the Hindus. The Hindus used to regard the early saints and dervishes as next to gods, but the Muslims used to revere them as religious persons. The Hindus glorified the living gods whose manifest powers were evident to them in the miracles and activities of these Peers; they did not glorify humanity by praising them.

Thus, the reason for which the saints have been glorified in "Sheikh Shudhodaya" is the same as the reasons for which the life and glory of Shri Chaitanya were written and loudly proclaimed in a subsequent age.

The sayings of Khana are also examples of old Bengali literature. Their language has been modernised in later years, but their primitive character cannot be questioned. In these sayings we find embalmed the experience of ages regarding cultivation, living, weather and similar other things, connected with everyday life.

The love-song in *Sheikh Subhodhaya* is the only example of a similar song in old Bengali literature. There is hardly any literature centering on individual in old Bengali. The folk literature collected in the twentieth century does not contain any piece belonging to a period earlier than the 15th century. From that point of view this love-song has a unique value. A curious reader may look into the story which is related about

this poem in this book:—

"I am a widow, everyday I go to the Ganges for a bath. Perchance a mishap took place—but the wind does not break a small tree. Leave this misdeed, let me go home, there is an iron fort in the sea. I close my palms in supplication, 'O the Noble One!, do not taint my honour'. This is a serious trouble, but there is one way out. If a person takes precaution properly, the wolf does not touch him. I am bowing myself prostrate at your feet, the Sureshwari Ganges is flowing between us. I paint my body with the chandan of Shrikhanda and feel a bit cool, but at night the whole body begins to burn, the breasts swell with excitement, the heat increase. I am passing my days with the burden of youth heavy on me—but I do not die. Tears are constantly flowing down the cheeks, the soul does not want to stay in the body, but the fear can never be driven out of the mind. Long sighs mock at me from all sides, the palm tree breaks without any wind. The palm tree fell, the wrinkles appeared on the face. Friend, now you can go: now I have no fear."

THIRD PART

Independent Muslim Bengal

(1350-1576)

CHAPTER I

The Political Background

The Turkish rule in Bengal ended with the rise of Shamsuddin Ilias Shah in Gaud (1342—1357). Ilias Shah was a man of vision and his patronage of Bengali language and literature opened up a new era of Muslim cultural renaissance in Bengal. From 1350 onwards, till the downfall of Daud Khan in 1576, the court at Gaud continued to be the cultural nerve-centre of Bengal.

The reign of successive Muslim Kings gave great impetus to the growth of a congenial atmosphere for literature and the arts. Indeed so liberal, tolerant and generous was the Muslim behaviour and attitude towards the local people that a large number of local Hindus were attracted by the cultural force of Islam and embraced it of their own accord, often bringing with them a number of local rites and traditions. Several mosques of Gaud still bear testimony to this fact. The "Lotan Mosque" built in 1475 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Yusuf Shah is reminiscent of the court dancer Meerabai ("Lotan" is the spoken Bengali word for "Nartan" meaning "dance"). A more well-designed and well decorated mosque is not to be found in the whole of Gaud. Similarly, the "Rajbibi Mosque" between Balua and Khaina lakes, to the south-east of the Kotwali door, and the "Pithawali Mosque" near this Kotwali door reminds of the distribution of Bengal cakes and sweets in the harem of Gaud. It is not their conversion to

Islam which is important for us: what is important is the fact that Bengali language had already entered and penetrated the precincts of the court, where it found inspiration and patronage.

During the reign of Sultan Ghayasuddin Azam Shah another important step was taken towards the development of Bengali literature. He not only invited the Persian Poet Hafiz to his court, but also encouraged and patronised Vidyapati, the Maithili poet and the first Muslim Bengali poet, Shah Muhammad Saghir. Vidyapati, later in one of his poems praised Sultan Ghayasuddin Shah as "Prabhu Gyasdev Suratan", and Saghir sang of him like this :—

> "Religious and scholarly among the Kings of Kings,
> The King is known to the world as an incarnation of god;
> An embodiment of justice among the people at large,
> The great King Gyas is the kernel of the world.
> Throughout my life, I have upheld the fact that
>
> There exists no better righteousness than to be respectful to him."

Though Sultan Ghyasuddin was a great monarch, history will always remember him as a still greater patron of culture: indeed he has attained immortality because of the fillip he gave to the Persian, Maithili and Bengali literatures.

Even after the occupation of Bengal by the Muslims, the Hindu feudal system has lingered on for some time. The feudal lords were mostly Hindus, famous among them being

Raja Ganesh of North Bengal, who captured power and ascended the throne of Gaud in 1414. Thanks to the persuasive efforts of the famous dervish of Pandua and a great leader of the Muslims, Shaikh Nuruddin Qutb-i-Alam, the son of Ganesh, Jadu, was attracted towards Islam and embraced it. This Jadu ruled Bengal for fourteen years (1413—1431) as king Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah, followed by his son Shamsuddin who reigned for 10 years from 1431 to 1442.

Thus, within a century of the conquest of Bengal by the Muslims, a native Muslim ruled Bengal. These twenty-eight years (1414—1442) of this dynasty have a special niche in the history of Bengali literature for the revolution that took place, both in the sphere of politics and in the realm of literary and cultural activities. Bengali literature and the Bengali language had gained recognition in the court earlier, but they now enjoyed direct royal patronage as well as gained public recognition. Krittivasa, the composer of the *Bengali* Ramayana was the first Bengali writer who recited his verses in the court of King Jalaluddin who honoured him with a garland of flowers. Though Krittivasa does not mention the name of the king, recent research has definitely proved him to be king Jalaluddin.

This public recognition of the Bengali language and literature had widespread consequences. Though it is not known whether the third king of this line Shamsuddin Ahmed (1431—1442) had honoured any poet of his age or not, it is a well-known fact that during his reign Chandidas flourished in Bengal, and we learn from the poems of Chandidas's mystic companion, Rami, that Chandidas went to sing in the court of the king of Gaud on invitation. There is enough historical

evidence to show that subordinate or senior rulers used to imitate Gaud in this age.

in 1442 Ilias Shah's lineage was re-established on the throne of Gaud, and for 45 years, four kings of this line ruled Bengal. Throughout this period Bengali continued to have a permanent place in the court. This is proved by the advent of Maladhar Basu, Zainuddin and Dhruvananda Mishra.

Maladhar Basu wrote "Shri Krishna Vijay" in seven years (from 1473 to 1480). The king was so pleased with this work that he honoured him with the title of "Gunaraj Khan". This king, Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah (1474—1481) is famous for his patronage of Bengali. He patronised Zainuddin to compose his famous poem about the Prophet of Islam, "*Rasul Vijay*".

In 1845, during the reign of the last Sultan of this line, Sultan Jalaluddin Fath-i-Shah, Dhruvananda Mishra brought out his famous social history "Mahavanshavali" which clearly shows that literary activity had become a part of social activity.

After a break in literary activity for seven years after the end of this line of Ilias Shah, Hussain Shah became the king of Gauda in 1493 and the next forty-five years from 1493 to 1538 were very fruitful for Bengali language and literature.

The enthusiasm for it shown by him and his successors ushered in a new era of literary progress.

Husain Shah was steeped in the best of Islamic learning and culture, with its breadth of vision and lofty ideals. He was a born Arab; but he married in a local Bengali family, thus establishing a close relationship between himself and the original inhabitants of Bengal. This proved highly fruitful for Bengal and poet Vijay Gupta of Fullashri, a village in Barisal paid him

the highest tribute in the preface to his *Manasa Mangal* (c.1416 Shaka or 1494 A. D.). Another poet from village Baduriya in Basirhat Sub-division of 24-Parganas, wrote in lavish praise of Husain Shah.

The custom of writing verse in the "Brajabuli" dialect was also initiated during this period. Poet Jashoraj Khan of Shrikhanda was an employee of Husain Shah, but in his eulogy of the king he lays stress more on the King's love of Bengali literature than on his own loyalty to him. It could have been considered very natural for him to praise him as the "ornament of the world", but when he refers to him as a man of refined literary taste, this appears to be fully justified.

One of the greater achievements of Husain Shah is the translation of old Hindu scriptures into Bengali. According to the direction of his General Paragal Khan, who conquered Tripura and chattal, Kavindra Parameshwara composed "Mahabharata Panchali" well-known as "Paragali Mahabharata." He writes about Husain Shah:

> "Embodiment of qualities like an incarnation of God in the Kaliyuga,
> Possessed of fame spreading all over the world,
> Sultan Alauddin, the King of Gaud, is my lord,
> Whose fame transcends the bounds of the three worlds."

A ballad on the Vidya Sundara theme was also composed during Husain Shah's reign. A Brahmin of Mymensingh District named Kanka was excommunicated by his co-religionists and he accepted a Muslim Peer as his spiritual guide. According

to the direction of his Peer, he composed "Vidya-Sundara" in 1502 in order to preach the greatness of "Satyapeer" true spiritual guide. This narrative has a literary as well as a historical value.

The composition of a folk tale *Manasa Mangal*, the establishment of a new branch of Bengali literature, "Brijabuli Verses" the translation of Hindu scriptures *The Bengali Mahabharata*, and the well-known mythological tale *Vidya-Sundara* all these enriched Bengali Literature during the reign of Husain Shah.

Another important development of his reign is the emergence of Chaitanya (1486—1533), who preached the Vaishnava religion, and became a great source of inspiration to a large body of Vaishnava literature which later on formed a rich branch of Bengali literature.

Nasiruddin Nasrat Shah (1519—1531), who succeeded his father, continued to patronise Bengali literature and it is said that he also got Mahabharata translated into Bengali. Poet Vidyapati Kaviranjan of Shrikhanda respectfully mentions the Sultan in one of his Vrajabuli verses :

"Infinite consideration being given, poet Vidyapati says,
Sultan Nasir Shah has been
Beside himself with joy like a bee, forgetful of the message of love to a lotus."

A Muslim poet named Shaikh Kabir also refers to him in Brijabuli verse in the same respectful tone :

"Shaikh Kabir, the humble, being aware of his (the King's)

qualities, says—
Sultan Nasira Shaha
Lost (his way) in the cluster of lotuses.

Love of literature is hereditary in the kings of this line and though Alauddin Firuz Shah—the son of Nasrat Shah reigned only for a few months, he commissioned a poet named Shridhar to compose *Vidyasundara* and the poet mentions him in the following verses :

"King Nasir Shah's son, the beautiful,
A connoisseur of all arts like a bee in enjoyment of lotuses,
Shri Peroj Shaha is well-known to be the crown-prince.
Kaviraj Shridhar composes (this laudatory verse) in rhymes known as Panchali."

Ghayasuddin Mahmud Shah, the uncle of Firuz Shah reigned for five years from 1533 to 1538. Part of Vrindavan Dasa's (1506—1589) *Chaitanya Bhagavat* and Lochan Dasa's. *Chaitanya Mangal* was composed during this period, and Banshivadana also became well-known during his reign.

Bengali literature had thus found firm roots, and during the next twenty-five years of Afghan rule it continued to flourish, producing such well-known poets as Muktaram Sen, Ram Chandra Khan, Jayananda, Raghunath Pandit, Madhavacharya, Banshi Das, Chandravati, Jnana Das, Gavinda Das.

Bengali script was in full use at this time. Sher Shah's name and title in this script have been discovered inscribed on one of his cannons. A cannon of Isa Khan, (dated 1575) still bears the inscription "Shri Ichha Khan" and points to the

wide use of the Bengali script and the acceptance of that script by the kings and rulers of the country.

Besides there is a sanskrit stone-inscription in Bengali script in the Varendra Museum at Rajshahi, which belongs to 1533. This shows that the Bengali script was so commonly used that even Sanskrit inscriptions were written in Bengali. This particular inscription is in the early 16th century Bengali script and described the costruction of a bridge by the "Prime Minister, Faras Khan, the son of Nurbaj Khan".

It may be mentioned here that at the beginning of the 19th century a group of Bengali writers began using Arabic script for religious books in Bengali. Muhammad Jan, who was a poet of this period, wrote his famous book *Namaj Mahatmya* in Arabic script in 1852. Six manuscripts of this book have so far been found, two of which are in Arabic script and four in the Bengali script. Though we have no evidence of any Bengali book in Arabic script until 1852, it is a well-known fact that the manuscript of Alaol's *Padmavati* which is in the Arabic script is about one hundred and fifty years old.

CHAPTER II

The Cultural Background

We have already traced the cultural background of Muslim Bengal of this period and seen that one of the achievements of this age was the efflorescence of the Bengali language and literature. During this period four languages were used by the people for different purposes. The common people used Bengali, but as Sanskrit was the court language before the advent of the Muslims and the religious language of the Hindus even after their arrival, it had a sanctimonious prestige among the masses. In the Muslim period Sanskrit no longer retained its prominence as the court language, though many Muslims learned and acquired the language in order to get acquainted with Hindu culture and Hindu life. Indeed there is no evidence of any Muslim hatred for Sanskrit. It is quite natural. When a nation becomes great, it tries to acquire all the learning that it can gather from as many languages of the world as it is possible for it to do. Bengali Muslims, as a rising people, were no exception to this rule, though of course the major sources of their inspiration lay in the tolerant Muslim ideology and culture.

There is enough evidence that the Muslims used to learn Arabic and Persian during this and the Turkish period. From the advent of the Muslims till the end of our independence, the stone inscriptions are all in Arabic. Obviously the Muslims used to consider it a duty to maintain their direct relation with the language, because it was the source and epitome of their

robust cultural traditions. They used to regard education as essential "for every Muslim man and woman". The influence of the culture of the Arabic language is noticeable in their cultivation of the Bengali language. A large number of Arabic words thus entered the Bengali language through the medium of the court language, which was Persian, but it also entered through the medium of Arabic literature directly. We shall see later on that the Muslims produced religious literature in Bengali. This literature is the direct product of our contact with the Arabic language and literature.

Persian was the permanent court language during the Muslim rule. Both the Hindus and the Muslims used to learn this language; some, because it was the court language, others because they wanted to understand Muslim culture. We get some examples in Jayananda's *Chaitanya Mangal* of the gradual influence of Persian literature and the Persian language and Muslim manners and dress on the Hindus of the country. Jayananda describes Jagai and Madhai, who later on became the disciples of Shri Chaitanya.

He has also written about the manners of the Hindus in the following verses: "A Brahmin will grow a beard and read Persian. He will put on socks and with a stick in one hand will take a bow in the other. The holy Brahmin will recite the Mathnavi". Naturally the Hindus were also deeply influenced by Persian language and literature. This influence is still noticeable in the words, subject-matter and ideas of the language and literature of this country.

Next to the linguistic aspect of our culture, is the Islamic character. Along with the establishment of Muslim rule,

Islam came to occupy a permanent place in this country. Before Bengal became independent, Islam did not spread widely in the country. With the expansion of Muslim dominions, Islam also became widespread. On the one hand Muslim generals annexed new territories to their kingdom, on the other, Muslim divines and saints went on preaching Islam with ever increasing vigour and zeal. The most famous among these saints are—Akhi Sirajuddin of Gaud (d. 1357); Shaikh Alaul Haq of Pandua (d.1398); Nur Qutb-i-Alam (d. 1416); Shah Anwar Quli Halvai of Furfura in Hoogly (d.1375); Shah Ismail Ghazi of Rangpur (killed in 1474); Khan Jahan of Khulna (d. 1458); Haji Baba Salih of Sonargaon (d. 1506); Shah Jalal of Sylhet (d. 1346); Shah Mohsin Awlia of Chittagong (d. 1397); Peer Badar (during the reign of Fakhruddin Mobarak Shah); Rasti Shah of Tippera (between 1351 and 1388); Mawlana Barkhurdar of Gaud (before 1486); Mawlana Ata of Devakot (d. 1355); Mawlana Shah Dawla of Rajshahi (alive in 1519); Shah Chand known as Dada Peer of Murshidabad (1493—1951); Sayyid Jamaluddin Amli of Saptagram (d. 1531), Sayyid Shah Ali Baghdadi of Mirpur in Dacca (alive in 1520), and, several others.

Thus the country was full of saints engaged in preaching Islam. Along with them we should remember the kings and governors of the land. Thousands of their stone-inscriptions are still lying scattered all over Bengal. The pictures of the rulers as we visualise them after studying these inscriptions are not the pictures of terrible blood-thirsty kings, but the figures of people mellowed by the touch of Islam and its cardinal principles of fraternity, love and peace. It seems as if Islam

has bestowed on Bengal all its best gifts of kindness and generosity and the troubled people of the country suffering from religious factions for ages are enjoying the fruits of this blessing calmly and happily.

This aspect of Islam was the most important cause of conversions, with the result that the number of native Muslims steadily increased. Their new Islamic culture found an outlet in the new Bengali literature of the period, and from now onwards they began to devote themselves in right earnest to the creation of the Muslim Bengali literature.

The earliest example of such a devotion is found in Shah Muhammad Saghir. He was an employee of Sultan Ghayasuddin Azam Shah (1389—1409) and the king was his great patron and supporter; otherwise the poet would not have written: "There exists no better righteousness than to be respectful to him (king)".

Independence is the greatest liberator of human intellect and culture, and more than two centuries of freedom prepared the right atmosphere for cultural activity of all kinds. Mosques, madrasahs and other institutions sprung up all over the country and fine arts began to be cultivated all over the land. In all the examples of fine arts we notice a blending of the native and the Islamic elements. The important thing to note is the transmutation of Hindu religious symbols into something Islamic. That is why we find a mixture of Muslim geometric art and floral designs with the lotus of Bengal. But that lotus has been Islamised by the inscription of the word "Allah". The Chota Sona Mosque at Gaud 'in East Bengal' is the chief example of this Islamisation. The lotus with the word "Allah"

on its petals is even now existing as a popular symbol for the Bengali Muslims. The close and lasting relationship established between Islam and Bengal was fruitfully expressed in the literature of the country. Bengali culture and Iranian culture were blended into a new Islamic culture. Naturally, the expression of this synthesis is most noticeable in the literature produced by Muslims and it is necessary to investigate into the extent and nature of this synthesis.

The Bengali language entered the precincts of the Muslim kings along with Hindu ladies of the "Harem". Bengali-speaking maid-servants and nurses also played an important role in making the language well-known to the members of the royal family. The employment of Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims to important posts enhanced the prestige of this language in the court of Gaud. Later on, the love shown by native Muslim kings made the language popular among the courtiers, and the love of the Husaini kings for the language, literature and the fine arts of the country, spread the cultivation of the language throughout the land. But, this patronage should not be regarded as an indirect gift of the Muslims to Bengali literature. It should be considered as a direct contribution of the Muslims. Without this patronage, Bengali literature would never have flourished; it would have died unknown and unsung like the wild flowers of the forest.

During this period the native Muslims increased in number and the foreigners, after the lapse of a few generations, became Bengalee in culture, and established marital relations with the native Muslims. As a result, even among the native Muslims we find "Khans", "Shaikhs", "Sayyids". The native of this

country retained their Bengalee culture after conversion. Thus, from this period the direct contribution of the Muslims are distinctly visible. The literature produced by these two sections is like the lotus inscribed with the word "Allah". Bengali literature retained its identity as Bengali literature, but it imbibed the spirit of Islam. This is the most characteristic contribution of the Muslims of this period.

The independent period of Bengal was an age of social and religious freedom and development. Islam entered deeply and permanently into the country; millions of people began to understand, appreciate and follow its dictates. This efflorescence of Islam made the non-Muslims afraid of many imaginary evils. Caste-ridden Hinduism could not prevent its onward march by its barriers of narrowness and parochial outlook. Naturally, the Hindus were greatly perturbed. The oldest example of this perturbation is recorded in the character-portrayal of Raja Dattakhan by the Brahmin pedigree keepers of Rarh. Raja Dattakhan was the head of a religious-cum-social organisation during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah, probably round about 1455. The name of this institution was "Jatimala Kachari". On behalf of this organisation Raja Dattakhan tried to unify the 57 Brahmin sects of the age but this did not remove the feeling of discontent among the Brahmins. A few years later Udayanacharya Bhaduri established "Parivarta Maryada" (reformed status) among the Brahmins of North Bengal by binding "Pati" and "Kap". As this was also ineffective, Devivar Ghatak bound the Rarh Brahmins into 36 "melas" in 1480. But when Dhruvananda Mishra wrote his *Mahavanshavali* in 1485, we notice in it the

same feeling of discontent with the existing caste-system.

Gradually this feeling spread from the Caste-Hindus to the lower castes: the Hindus began to question the veracity of the Vedas, gods and the Puranas and began thinking seriously about Islam and its cardinal principles. Is religion for man or is man for religion?—this question cropped up in their minds. The most famous poet of the period, Chandidas sang:

"Listen O man, O my brother !
Man is true, there is nothing truer or better than him."

This feeling made the conservative veterans think seriously of the safety of their own position. During the reign of Husain Shah, Pundits Raghunandan and Raghunath Shiromani of the greatest centre of Sanskrit learning in Navadvip took the leadership of the conservative Hindus and tried to create a smoke-screen of logic and Sanhita.

This attempt proved futile. Round about 1540, Nulo Panchanan wrote his *Goshthi Katha* in which he preached "Mela Bandhan". He did not praise the work of pundits like Raghunath and Raghunandan. He pointed out that even great houses were seriously disturbed. But where learned scholars like Raghunandan and Raghunath failed, Nulo Panchanan could hardly achieve anything. As a matter of fact there was not a single aspect of the Hindu religion and culture on which Islam did not have its impress. This disturbed the orthodox Hindus, and made them angry and bitter. This bitterness has been expressed, for example, in *Prema Vilas*,

All the people of this age are misbehaving,
Because foreigners have conquered the country.

Chaitanyadeva (1485—1533) flourished during this period. From 1506 onwards he began preaching the Gaudian form of the Vaishnava faith. This Vaishnavism is only a reaction to the conservatism of the Ghatakas and the Brahmin pundits. It began to spread, only because it accepted the broad humanitarian principles of Islam. "To recite the name of the Lord and to be kind to all creatures" was the cardinal principle of this faith. The recital of the "Name of the Lord" took the form of singing (Sankirtana) and "the kindness to creatures" took the form of fraternity and equality and almost destroyed the age-old caste-system. This cardinal principle of the Vaishnavas is only a Bengali form of the Sufi principle of "Zikr" (recital of God's name) and "Khidmat" (service of humanity). These Islamic principles of equality and fraternity are evident in Vaishnavism. There is also hardly any difference between the "Sama" of the Sufis and the "Kirtana" of the Vaishnavas. The Physical and mental conditions of the Sufis and Vaishnavas, after their respective "Samas" and "Kirtanas" have close resemblance with one another. Even the Bengali and Persian words mean the same thing: *Prema* of the Vaishnavas is the *Ishk* of the Sufis; *Radha-Krishna* are the same as *Saqi and But*, or *Shama and Parwana*; *Aisharya* is the same as the *Karamat* of the Sufis.

The emergence of Chaitanya led not only to a social and religious revolution in the country, it also revolutionized the literature of Bengal. He did not use Sanskrit to preach his

religion as Raghunandan and Raghunath did for theirs; he chose Bengali as his medium. He eschewed the Vedas and the Puranas and started enjoying the writings of Vidyapati and Chandidas. As a result of this his disciples and followers engaged themselves in the cultivation of the Bengali language.

An analysis of the Gaudian form of Vaishnavism proves it to be almost a Bengali version of Muslim Sufism. The "Ghazaliat" of the Sufis and the "Padavalis" of the Vaishnavas are practically similar in language and content. The "Mai" and "Sharb" of the Sufis have only been transformed into the "Prema" and "Priti" of the Vaishnavas. The "Ashiq" and "Mashuq" of Sufi literature have received the titles Radha and Krishna. "Hijran" and "Visal" have become "Viraha" and "Milan" in Bengali. The Radha and Krishna of the Vaishnavas are not the Radha and Krishna of the Puranas. In Vaishnava Padavali they are symbols of human soul and God respectively; the flute of Krishna symbolises the call that comes from the Lord. Between Radha and Krishna is the river Jumna symbolising this world and wordly life which prevents the soul from flying away to God. But the sound of flute enchants the soul, the call of God reaches the shores of this world and the soul is carried away by its desire to meet the Lord. That is why the poet sings :

"Thou art playing on the flute from the other bank I, listen, but I am an unfortunate woman who does not know how to swim."

Is there any relation between these and the Radha-Krishna of the

Puranas? Just as the Arabic word "Allah" became "Khuda" in Persian (originally "Svdha" of Sanskrit) similarly the "Ashiq" and "Mashuq" of the Sufis have been transformed into the "Radha and Krishna" of the Vaishnavas. Though the names are the same, their significance of the flute of Krishna is the same as the significance of the flute in Jalaluddin Rumi's *Mathnavi*.

Let us now take up one of the major branches of Vaishnava literature—the biographies. Vaishnavas call them "Mahajana Charit". It is similar to the Muslim work "Tazkirat-ul-Awlia". Just as the Vaishnavism of Gaud is different from ancient Vaishnavism, similarly "*Mahajan Charit*" is different from "Harsha Charit" or "*Raghuvansha*". But these biographies were written in the same style as in *Tazkirat-ul Awlia*, there is the same kind of mixture of miracles and realism in *Adwaita Prakash* (c.1568), *Chaitanya Bhagavat* (c.1575), *Chaitanya Charitamrita* (c.1585). It is sheer ignorance to assert that these writers, who are known to have read the *Mathnavi*, did not read Tazkirat-ul-Awlia.

The Muslims also created a literature in the Vaishnava style, contributing directly to this new Bengali literature. The most conspicuous example of this contribution is the *Pada* songs of Alawul who was also the writer of a Muslim religious book called *Tohfa*. The reasons for this is the similarity between Sufism and Vaishnavism. The innermost core of Vaishnavism was filled with Sufistic sentiments. Thus, just as wine, prohibited by Islam, had assumed a symbolic appearance in Sufistic literature, Radha and Krishna, though originally Hindu, had been purified of gross elements and transformed into *Ashiq* and *Mashuq* in Vaishnava literature. The Muslims used to

study Sufi literature, they did not become Muslim Vaishnava poets; they remained Muslim poets, only composed songs in the Vaishnava style.

This in brief was the cultural atmosphere, the literary products of which we will describe in the next chapter.

CHAPTERIII

Muslim Bengali Literature of Independent Bengal

(Poetry and the Poets)

It is a very unfortunate fact that the Muslims of the 19th century did not take to English education as the Hindus did. The Hindus thus stole a march over the Muslims. They went ahead with collecting the books and manuscripts which could help them in building up their past. A few books written by Muslims were also accidentally discovered, but there was no deliberate attempt to collect them and quite a considerable number of them have been lost. Had not late Abdul Karim Sahitya-visarad (1869-1953) started collecting Muslim works, we should have been the poorer in our cultural heritage. At present our main source is the collection of books he had personally made at Chittagong. In spite of this limitation it is not very difficult to form a clear picture of Muslim contribution to Bengali language and literature. We record below some of these contributions.

1. Shah Muhammad Saghir

Shah Muhammad Saghir is the oldest Muslim poet of Bengal. He composed a long narrative poem called "*Yusuf-Zulaikha*" during the reign of Sultan Ghayasuddin Azam Shah (1389—1409) to whom the poet refers thus in his Dedication:

(*In Payar Meter*)

Thirdly, I bow down to the Lord of the land;

The wolf and the sheep are friendly for fear of him.
He is the most religious and learned of the kings,
Well-known to all and sundry as the Incarnation of gods.
Among men he is like the Incarnation of Truth.
He is Gyas, the great Lord of the land,
He fulfilled the saying of the wise:
"The King wants everywhere to establish his conquest, but
He desires to be conquered by his son or disciple".
And seized the throne of Bengal and Gauda.
His heart is full of piety and kindness,
He is matchlessly beautiful as an epitome of all virtues.
His charming face is like the full-moon and
Sweet and delicious are the words he utters.
A matchless dilettante, the King is dear to ladies;
Who is he, who can successfully describe the greatness of this virtue?
He conquered all the Kings in war with him.
Beating the drums of victory louder and louder.
He destroys his enemies but patronizes the loyal ones,
And takes care of his subjects according to his best of desires
Throughout my whole life, I have realised that
There exists no better righteousness than to be respectful to him.
Muhammad Saghir is obedient to his command
Let his fame spread over the three worlds.

The poet assumes that the father of king "Ghayas" felt pride in being defeated by his son. The history of Bengal records the tale of only one such person Ghayasuddin who fought with

his father Sikander Shah. Hence this Ghayas is none but Ghayasuddin Azam Shah.

We do not come across any personal references in this poem, but it is not mixed up with the language which points to its interpolations or changes made by scribes and has used certain words which are at present in use only in Chittagong dialect. But we do not know whether five hundred years ago they belonged to Chittagong dialect alone. The words are: *Kane*—meaning Who? *Tarunja* (a king fruit), *Batavian*—Lemon *Kachia*—Kash flower; *Khohamay*—misty. He may not have belonged to Chittagong, but his style proves that he must have been an inhabitant of somewhere near Chittagong, especially in view of the fact that all his manuscripts have been discovered in Chittagong and Tippera.

Most probably he came of a family of saints. Though the number of colophons are very few, in some of them he refers to himself as Shah; for example, he says, "Shah Mohammad says that Yusuf-Zulaikha is written in a native language in Payar meters".

He might have got the title of the poem from his Peer after successfully completing his novitiate, though we have no definite proof to confirm this.

He does not mention whether he composed this poem at the request of the king, therefore, we may conclude that he composed it of his own accord. But it is evident from the last four lines of the "Dedication" quoted above that he was an employee of the king.

It may seem strange that a man of the family of the saints would endeavour to preach religion through the medium of

verse and he did pioneering work by doing so in the local language. Bengali, the poet himself states, does not destroy or mutilate the truth, and the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha is a tale of religious love. Therefore, he does not see any objection in the narration in popular language of a tale told in the Holy Quran.

Though his principal aim is to narrate a religious story to the Bengali-speaking Muslims, his story is artistically successful too. It has been told in a nutshell in the Bible and the Quran; Firdausi and Jami composed long narratives on this theme. Saghir is earlier than Jami; how far he is indebted to Firdausi is a topic on which research can be carried on. All that we can say is that it not only conjures up the atmosphere of Bengal, it also includes a Bengali character. The name of the merchant who bought Yusuf (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) is Maniru—a Bengali name. This word has been formed by the addition of 'Aru' to the root word "Mani". When this Maniru or the trader in pearls spent all his money, he said,

"I have nothing else than this 'Tamar Dhepua',
(brass coin), take this as his price".

So he bought Yusuf with that "Dhepua" i.e., coin. This "Dhepua" is a typical product of Bengal. The marriage of the younger brother of Yusuf, Ibn-Yamin with Bidhuprava, the daughter of the king of Madhupur (Is this the Madhupur of Dacca?), is also a typical Bengali folk tale.

2. Zainuddin

Another outstanding poet of Muslim Bengal of this period

is Zainuddin. "*Rasul Vijay*" is his only known work uptil now, but the only discovered manuscript is in a badly mutilated condition and is written in almost an illegible hand. The scribe has done such a great harm to it that it is difficult to read it correctly.

Poet Zainuddin was the laureate of Sultan Yusuf Shah of Gaud (1474—1481). He repeatedly mentions the king's name in the colophons of his composition. A few samples of his colophons are translated below :—

"The Sultan is equal to Harish Chandra in charity and to Indra in glory. He is the pearl of kings, the glorious. Shrijut Yusuf Khan is the main source of my devotion and inspiration and I have composed this poem for his sake alone. He is Kalpataru in virtue, Shukra in knowledge Mahesha in meditation.

or

Shrijut Yusuf Khan has unlimited virtues; he enjoys listening to this tale of the Holy Prophet's victories.

As the poet has nowhere mentioned "Yusuf Khan" and has all through mentioned him as "Khan", some scholars have doubted whether this Yusuf Khan is the same as the Yusuf Shah of Gaud. I do not think there is any reason to doubt this. "Rajratna", "Rajyeswar—these words evidently point to the king of Gaud. Probably Yusuf Khan was then the crown prince and not the king. In another place the poet has mentioned him as "Yusuf Nayaka". In old Bengali "Nayaka" means "the crown prince" as for example in the following

verses :

"Shrijut Nayaka se je Nasarat Khan
Rachaila panchali je guner nidan."

"*Rasul Vijay*" is not an original composition. The poet has surely taken it from some Persian poem. But that it is not a literal translation from Persian is quite evident. The poet has admitted his debt to some unknown Persian poem in his description of Ameer's fight:

"Quite a large number of battles are described in the "Kitab",
But I have related only a few of them here."

"Vijay Kavya" is a special kind of poem in the middle Bengali literature like the *Mangala poems*—such as Manasa Mangal or Chandi Mangal. The chief characteristic of this type of poems is the glorification of the hero through the descriptions of his brave and somewhat miraculous performances. Zainuddin's "Rasul Vijay" describes the exploits of the Holy Prophet in the same manner. Except the names of certain historical figures, nothing is historically true in this poem; though the poet claims the incidents to have been quoted from a Persian poem. The narrative is supposed to be an incident from the Holy Prophet's life, when he had declared war against the king of Jaykum. The kingdom of Jaykum was very far away from Medina—it used to take six months to reach that place. The poet describes in an exaggerated manner, an imaginary journey. The Holy Prophet went on with his retinue, crossed rivers and forests on his way and after a few days met a spy of the king of Jaykum—a fisherman. The Holy Prophet sent a message to the king

inviting him to embrace Islam. Bahram, the king of Jaykum received that message and became very furious and threatened to go to war with the Holy Prophet, who then entered the country with his pious men. Both the armies became ready and a terrible battle was fought. The king of Jaykum was defeated, as the bravery of the Muslim army,

Made them afraid and they fled away
Just as the waves in the Padma break on each other due to the wind.

After the war was over the armies returned to their respective camps for rest. Throughout the night they planned. Next day they again faced each other and the battle thus continued for some days. Three sons of the king of Jaykum were captured and Hazrat Ali was also attacked furiously by his enemies and wounded. But he fought his way back, and as soon as he came to the Holy Prophet, the Holy Prophet caressed him with his hand and the wounds vanished. He then returned to the battle-field and began to fight with renewed vigour, killing elephants and horses and throwing huge boulders at the enemies. Thus he slew thousands of soldiers himself.

Here the book is abruptly cut short.

3. Muzammil

Muzammil who lived and wrote in the middle of the 15th century was the third great poet of this age. Uptil now, we have discovered three books by him: (i) *Nitishastra Varta*; (ii) *Sayat Nama*; (iii) *Khanjan-charitra*. Of these *Khanjan-charitra*,

which consists of a few manuscript sheets, does not seem to have been anything but part of a bigger work. A chapter of *Sayat Nama* is called "*Khanjan-Vachan*". As *Khanjan-charitra* is very much similar to Khanjan-Vachan, I think it was originally a part of *Sayat Nama*; Some scribe copied it separately and thus it has later on appeared as an independenst work.

Some colophonic verses of *Nitishastra Varta* and *Sayat Nama* refer to Yusuf and Muhammad Shafi. This leads to the confusion that the books might have been composed by three people. But there are so many colophonic verses by Muzammil that we cannot but conclude the original writer was Muzammil and these two persons added a few verses here and there and hence added a few colophonic verses of their own. This is evident from the difference between the style of their colophonic verses. It was a well-known practice in those days to connect one's name with the name of a famous writer and thereby fulfil one's craving for immortal fame. Hence the date of composition (1757 A.D.) mentioned by Muhammad Shafi at the end of the book cannot be accepted as true. From *Nurnama*, a book composed by Muhammad Shafi we learn that the date of copying it was the same as the date mentioned here. This copy was again made in 1796. Though Shafi did not do it himself, because he died nearly 50 years earlier, this date does not tally with our recent researches regarding Muzammil.

Of later poets, Muhammad Muqim was the first to mention Muzammil. While referring to the earlier poets of Chittagong Muqim refers to Muzammil along with Sayyid Sultan, Alaol and others in his book, *Gul-e-Bakawali*. From his own reference

in another book *Fayedul Muqtadi*, we gather that he composed it in 1737. Obviously, Muzammil was much earlier than that.

Is Muzammil then a poet of the 17th century? From the nature of the manuscript of *Sayat Nama* (1757), the character of his language and the dates of his Peer it seems that he belongs to an earlier period. His language is surely older than 17th century Bengali. The dates of his Peer proves him to be a man of the 16th century. He says in one place in *Sayat Nama* that he has written this book under instruction from his Peer, Shah Badruddin.

Peer Badruddin Badr-i-Alam of Bihar preached Islam in Kalna in Burdwan district. He is supposed to have gone to Chittagong also, and many people think that Peer Badar Shah of Chittagong (known as Badar Alam in Punthis) is the same person as Peer Badruddin Badri Alam of Bihar. He died in Bihar in 1440 A.D., though a fake shrine of this Peer is still in Kalna. Evidently the poet became his disciple when he came to Chittagong. In that case, poet Muzammil was definitely alive before 1440 and also after 1440. Hence if he does not belong to the early part of the 15th century, he must surely be accepted as a poet of the middle of that century. That is why his language is so old.

From poet Muqim's statement it appears that he belonged to Chittagong. He was a sufi-poet, *Sayat Nama* proves it. "Ilm-us-Sa'at" is a branch of "Ilmut-Tasawwuf" or the mystic science. The poet remarks that he has written in Bengali only in order to be understood by the people. This book of course contains many other things like the superstitions regarding rainfall, description of bathing and omen of Khanjan.

The poet says that the poem is translated from Arabic, but it is so full of Bengali sentiments and situations that if at all, it is a very free adaptation of an Arabic theme to Bengali surroundings.

Several things have been discussed in *Nitishastra Varta*; of these the most important are: earthquake; lunar and solar eclipse; dreams; ominous and auspicious signs; burning down of houses; "Bahas-Akbar" and a few others.

4. Chand Qazi

Chand Qazi is another name which deserves mention here. He was a Qazi (judge) of Navadwip under Sayyid Alauddin Husain Shah, the king of Gauda (1493—1519). His very name proves him to be a native of Bengali. When he was the Qazi of Navadwip, the significant emergence and expansion of the Gaudian form of Vaishnavism took place. Chand Qazi became famous during that time and is regarded even now as a remarkable historical figure of that period.

It is not known whether Chand Qazi composed any long poem; but he composed quite a few "padas", one of which has been discovered and is decidedly a fine poem. It blends local symbols with the symbol of the flute which Jalaluddin Rumi used in his *Mathnavi*, and reminds one of the "Ghazaliat" of the Persian sufi poets.

5. Shaikh Kabir

Shaikh Kabir is another composer of pada songs. He flourished during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Nasrat Shah

(1519—1532). He was well-established as a recognised composer, and one of his 'Holi' songs finds a place in the famous anthology of Vaishnava songs: called "*Gaudapada Tarangini*". In that song the colophon mentions only "Kabir". But from the style it is evident that this Kabir is none but Shaikh Kabir. One of his poems ends with an eulogy of king Nasrat Shah which suggests that he was an employee of the Sultan.

Dr. Shahidullah thinks that the Vaishnava composer Kavi Shekhar has been transformed by the scribes into Shaikh Kavir. His conjecture is based upon the similarity between a verse of Shaikh Kabir and that of Kavi Shekhar. But the question arises: if the scribes could have changed Kavi Shekhar into Shaikh Kabir, might they not have changed Shaikh Kavir into Kavishekhar? This is more valid because Kavi Shekhar belonged to mid-sixteenth century. Had Kavi Shekhar mentioned Sultan Nasrat Shah in any of his songs we could have accepted Dr. Shahidullah's theory as probable.

6. Afzal Ali

Afzal Ali is one of the well-known poets of mediaeval Bengali literature. So far, only his *Nasihat Nama* and two of his Vaishnava padas have been discovered. One of these pada-poems was collected by Vrajasundar Sanyal in his *Muslim Vaishnava Poets*, Vol 4, and the other was published in 1325(Bengali year) in the Pausha number of the *Bharatvarsha*, a monthly journal.

He was an inhabitant of village Milua in Satkania police area in Chittagong. His father's name was Bhangu Fakir. He was

himself a learned Muslim and a saint, a disciple of Shah Rustam. The poet mentions him as a well-known saint conversant with secret knowledge of God. Even now, his grave is there and also a market in his name in Satkania. The local people say that this dervish was alive nearly four hundred years ago. This shows that our poet belongs to a very early period of our history.

The manuscript of *Nasihat Nama* is nearly two hundred years old. It was written by another poet named Mohsin Ali, who has mentioned in the book that the book was copied in 24th Maghi which may mean either 1124 (Beng)—1762 A.D. or 1024 (B) or 1662 A.D. In any case, Poet Afzal did not belong to the 17th century because, not only from hearsay about the dates of Rustam Shah, but also from one of his colophons, we get a reference to Syed Firuz Shah. The style of this reference is the same as the style of references to kings by other poets. Moreover, Firuz Shah obviously cannot be one of his Peers, because generally one does not have two Peers—and we already know that the poet's Peer was Rustam Shah. Therefore this Firuz Shah (1532—1533) was the Sultan of Gaud. As the poet refers to Firuz Shah not as Sultan, but as Sayyid, it seems that the poet received some help from him when he was a prince. We may mention here that another poet of Chittagong, Shreedhar, also refers to Firuz Shah as a prince.

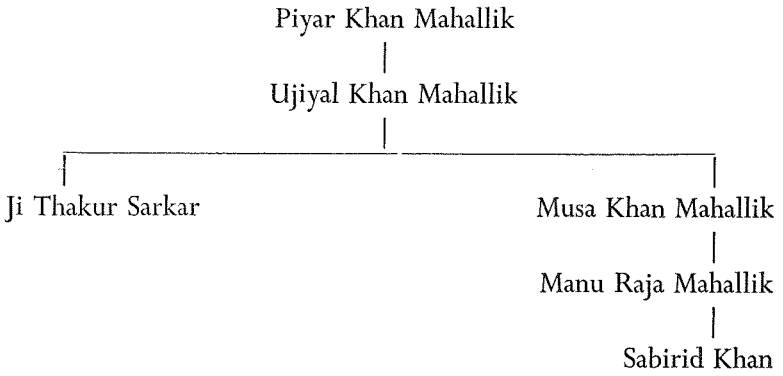
Actually *Nasihat Nama* is a didactic poem in which the poet imparts religious instructions. Dervish Rustam comes to the poet in dream and teaches him, and the poet, so he says, relates only what he has been taught. His statements are in

accordance with the fundamental principles of the Holy Quran and the Hadith. There is no poetry in this piece. It was not very common till the third quarter of the 16th century to give religious instructions in Bengali. From that point of view it has a special significance in the history of Muslim Bengali literature. His pada-songs are also remarkable for their poetic quality, simplicity and sincerity.

7. Sabirid Khan

Sabirid Khan wrote a number of books. A few have been discovered in mutilated form, hence details regarding him have not yet been unearthed. The books are :—

(a) *Vidyasundar*, (b) *Rasul-Vijay*, (c) *Hanifa-o-Kayra-pari*. In one of the colophons in Vidyasundar he has discussed his lineage. From this we have made the following chart :—



From this chart it appears that the poet was a born Pathan. Some members of his family, and in all probability he himself

served the king either as Mahallik or as Sarkar. He was an inhabitant of Chittagong. It is said that his father established the village "Nanupur" in Ichapur Pargana in P. S. Phatikchari in Chittagong and hence the village was named after him. Fazlur Rahman Master of this village claims himself to be a descendant of Sabirid Khan. But Master Saheb could not tell us whether Sabirid Khan was at all a poet or not.

His dates have not been established as yet. His language, the only proof of his dates belongs to late 16th century. Hence he is a poet of this period and we have nothing to prove to the contrary. Whatever be the reason—lack of popularity or because the manuscript is very old—the linguistic and grammatical peculiarities noticeable in this piece cannot but be found in late 16th century and early 17th century writings. Some of the peculiarities are quoted below :—

In *Rasul-Vijay* : (a) He always uses 'Tahaka', 'Rajaka etc., in place of "tahake" (to him) and "Rajake" (to the king objective case).

(b) Verbs referring to the second person invariably and with "si" as for example "Karasi" "Haosi" etc.

(c) Verbs referring to first person are nasalised. He uses, for example, in place "deom" the older form "deon".

(d) 'sh' is transformed into 'kh' as in the Maithili language: '*Sudha Varikhay*', for example.

(e) The Persian word "shadi" and not the Bengali word 'Vivaha' (marriage) is used.

(f) Pronouns are written with the following forms : 'Ahmhi', 'Tumhi', 'Mui', etc.,

Vidyasundar: Along with the peculiarities mentioned above

in sections a, b, c and f there are the following additional peculiarities :

(a) Old verbs: e.g. Lakhi for pekhi (or having seen); hante (from) karanti (does), bhela (was) etc.
(b) for suffix : Khandau, Hau.

Vidyasundar is a very old tale. Probably the oldest example is to be found in the *Chaurapancashika* of Vilhan. But it is not known whether Sabirid Khan had read it or got his tale from some other source. But it is evident from the Sanskrit Shlokas used by him as epigrams to each section, that he got the theme of this poetic drama from some Sanskrit work. The Sanskrit Shlokas give in a nutshell the gist of the Bengali narratives which follow them.

Two other *Vidyasundaras* were composed in the 16th century and two more in the 17th. We have already mentioned the two narratives of the 16th century, one by Dwija Shridhar, the other by Kavi Kanka. Govinda Das and Krishnaram Das were the two poets who composed Vidyasundaras in the 17th century. None of them has written in a language older than that used by Sabirid Khan.

Vidyasundar is not a mere narrative poem. It has dramatic qualities. There are stage-directions in Sanskrit—the entrance and exit of Sundar, Malini and others are indicated. The descriptions are like sceneries. The poet was aware of it and referred to this poem as a "Lyrical drama".

Though *Vidyasundar* theme is a common theme of the period, Sabirid Khan has made alterations and additions. In his story Sundar was the only son of the king of Vijaynagar—Gunasar

and Kalavati—the queen. When he grew up as a great scholar and a poet he was entitled "Vidyapati". The king used to live in Ratnavatipuri.

Vidya was the daughter of Vikramakeshari. In another place he has been called Virsinha. Her mother's name was Shiladevi. They used to live in the city of Kanchipur in Ujani. Vidya also became vastly learned and got the title "Vidyavati". She sent challenge to all the neighbouring countries and proclaimed that she would marry the person, who would be proved more learned than herself. The man, who went about carrying this news from place to place, was called Madhava. When Sundar heard of her from Madhava he came to Ujani. It was evening. He met a "Malini"—a female gardener. He requested the Malini to allow him to pass the night under her roof. Malini replied that if the head Watchman (Kotwal) would see him in her house he would first of all behead them both and then inform the king. How would she explain the matter to the Kotwal? Here the book is abruptly cut short.

Vidyasundar is not mere love-story. It is an allegory of the meeting of the body and the soul. It has no historical truth in it. That is why different poets could narrate it in different manners and with different interpolations. Had it been a historical fact, there would have been less drastic variations in the names of places and persons.

The main contribution of Sabirid Khan lies in his transformation of this tale into a lyrical drama. The spiritual significance of this tale is given below:

Plato has said that the perfect ideal for man is : "A refined

mind in a beautiful body''. Indeed, humanity achieves perfection when the body is made perfect through exercise and the mind is enriched by knowledge and wisdom. The ideal of *Vidyasundar* is this Platonic ideal for man. According to this ideal, Sundar represents bodily perfection and Vieya symbolises mental perfection. All the Vidyasundar tales describe this perfection achieved through the meeting of the body and soul.

Moreover, a well-known practice of the sufis is to explain tales of love as allegories. That is why sufis have used tales of Laili-Majnu, Yusuf-Zulaikha to explain the love of God and the human soul.

(b) *Rasul Vijay* : The manuscript of Rasul-Vijay is also in a mutilated form. We have only 12 pages (pp 21-32) of the book. Still, it is not very difficult for us to understand the content of the poem. This is nothing but the glorification of the Holy Prophet's victories in war. In one place the book has been mentioned as *Janganama*, in another place as *Rasul Vijay*; but since similar tales were written in the past they passed under the caption ''*Rasul Vijay*'' we prefer the name of 'Rasul Vijay' to 'Janganama'.

Of course a name does not make any difference to the content. The poet's aim is to glorify the Holy Prophet's victories—the same as the aim of Jainuddin whose *Rasul-Vijay* we have already discussed. Jainuddin's work is inferior to Sabirid Khan's in poetic quality and scholarship.

(c) *Hanifa-o-Kayra Pari* : The earlier two ''Punthis'' are written in Sanskritised Bengali and in a high-flown style. The style of the present work is simple and elegant, though the language retains the characteristics of mediaeval Bengali.

The story runs as follows: Jaygun alias Pakdaman, the daughter of king Sahiram was defeated by Hanifa in a fight and later became his wife. Hanifa went out conquering different kingdoms and converting the kings to Islam. A man named Mukabil Halavi was Hanifa's constant companion. Hanifa was injured in his battle against king Sahiram. Kayra Pari, the daughter of Shahapari fell in love with Hanifa and tried to seduce him. When Hanifa was injured and senseless in his ''tangi'' (Bala-Khana—lofty house for rest) Kayra Pari entered the 'tangi' and took him away to her kingdom. Jaygun and Mukabil Halavi were with Hanifa, but could not understand how and when this theft was committed. When they realised it, they were overwhelmed with grief.

Hazrat Ali came to know of it. He went to the Holy Prophet's shrine and at once realised that Kayra had taken Hanifa to her home in the city of Rokam and only Jaygun could save him. Hence Jaygun went to that city and fought with king Durmik and converted him to Islam.

The punthi is cut short at this place.

The inhabitants of Chittagong say that the 'tangi' of Hanifa and Kayra Pari can still be seen on the very high peak of a mountain to the south-east border of the district. If any one wants to reach that place huge boulders are thrown upon him by unseen hands. There is an island named ''Shahaparir Dwip'' (The island of Shahapari) to the south of the district. No one knows whether the story centres round this island or not. We cannot also say whether ''Rokam'' is an altered version of the ancient name ''Rokhying'' or ''Roshang'' for Arakan.

8. Dona Gazi

The title of his poem is "*Saiful Mulk*" *Badiuzzamal*" Alawul, the famous 17th century poet of Bengal wrote a poem on that theme. Drawing conclusion from the facts that Alawul was well-known in the period and also because of our lack of sufficient acquaintance with this poet's work, we stated in our book "*Arakan Rajshabhay*" *Bangla Shahitya*" that Donagazi belonged to a later period. But after analysing this book in detail we find that our earlier conclusion is incorrect. We also said in our last work that there is no colophon in the poem. But I have now marked a few colophons.

The extant manuscript of the poem is a very old one—probably two hundred to two hundred and fifty years old. It contains pages 5 to 185. A few of the inner pages are also missing. There is the name of the scribe in one place: "Sharihin Sonaulla, Sang: Lautali". It was collected by Tarik Mian, a teacher of Aliganj Guru Training School in Tippera.

Modern research has established, though on some shaky grounds, the poet Donagazi belonged to the Chandpur sub-division of Tippera district. A few old men of this sub-division still remember his name. They say that the poet lived more than two hundred years ago. As the manuscript has no beginning and end and as no second manuscript has been discovered, we shall have to rely entirely on internal evidence. From this point of view the poet was definitely a precursor of Alaol. There is no linguistic similarity to prove that they knew each other's works. They both drew from some Persian

source. There are slight differences in their proper names as for example, "Mallik" and "Sayed" of Alaol are "Malka" and "Saad" in Donagazi.

Certain evidences of the poet's ancientness have established beyond any doubt that Donagazi preceded Alaol. The "Prakrit" characteristics of his language, his metric irregularities, uncertain end-rhymes and the use of a large number of old words and phrases place him in mid-sixteenth century by the side of the poets of independent Bengal. A few examples of these peculiarities are given below :

1. Instead of the use of 'Ke', the older form 'Ka' has been used to the end of words in the object case; *e.g.* 'Patika', 'Dohaka', etc.
2. Instead of ending a verb in the continuous tense with '*-itechhi*', he ends it with '-anti or '-enti', *e.g.* 'Nachanti Sundari' etc.
3. Instead of suffix 'Diya' he uses the older form 'Di'.

We need not narrate the tale over here since we have done so elsewhere. Though the story is practically the same as that in Alaol the styles of the two poets are fundamentally different. Alaol's language is highly Sanskritic and of the later age. Alaol is decidedly the better poet.

9. Shaikh Faizullah

Shaikh Faizullah occupies an important place among the writers of independent Bengal. Uptil now we have discovered

five of his poems. They are as follows:—

(a) *Goraksha-Vijay or Gorkha Vijay*
(b) *Gazi Rijay*
(c) *Satya Peer*
(d) *Joynaler Chautisha*
(e) *Ragnama.*

Once I saw a few pages of *Satya Peer* along with another punthi—*Manohar Madhumalati* copied in the month of Vaishakh in Maghi 1101 (1709 A.D.) by "Shree Abdul Ali" of Paragalpur in Chittagong. With my best efforts I could not get hold of these two manuscripts. I could only take down the first few verses of *Satyapeer* which run as follows:—

Gorkkha-Vijay addye manisiddha kata I
Kahilam Sabha Katha shunilam jata II
Khontaduarer peer Ismail Gazi I
Gazir Vijaye seha moka haila raji II
Eve kahi Satyapeer apurva kathan I
Dhana bade shunile pataka khandan II
Muni Rasa Veda Shashi shake Kahi san I
Shekh Faizullah bhave bhabi dhakha mana II.

From these verses it appears that Shaikh Faizullah composed his *Satyapeer* in 1467 or 1497 Shakavda or 1545 or 1575 A.D. I have not as yet discovered any copy of this poem. Dr. Sukumar Sen discovered a *Satyapeer* written by some Faizullah who according to him belonged to West Bengal. Whether the Faizullah of East Bengal is the same person as the Faizullah

of West Bengal is an undecided matter. *Gorakkah-Vijay* is his most famous work. This book has been edited and published by *Vangiya Shahitya Parishat* and also by Vishwavarati. We shall discuss it later on.

We have no copy of Shaikh Faizullah's *Gazi-Vijaya*. The poet has said in the verses quoted above that in this poem he has described the exploits of Peer Ismail Ghazi of Kantaduar. Ismail is a well-known historical figure of Bengal. He preached Islam in North Bengal during the reign of Sultan Barbak Shah (1459—1474) and also acted as one of his generals. For some unknown political reason he was beheaded by the Sultan's order in 1474. It is said that his head was buried in Kantaduar in Rangpur district and the trunk was buried in Gadmandaran in Burdwan. There are thus two shrines of Ismail Ghazi in these two places. This shows that Shaikh Faizullah could not have been a contemporary of Ismail Ghazi, but had surely composed his *Gazi-Vijay* long after the martyrdom of Gazi, probably round about 1570 A.D. Thus his *Sataypeer* was composed most probably in 1575. *Gazi-Vijay* is thus an historical narrative.

Jaynaler Chautisha is an elegiac poem. It records the lamentation of Jaynal after the tragedy of Muharram. Chautisha is a type of Bengali poetry, containing thirtyfour letters of the Bengali alphabet serially at the beginning of each stanza with one of the letters as an initial letter of the first word of the lines of that stanza. These are "Marsia"-type of poems—long elegies. This poem belongs to that class. It has no other distinguishing feature.

Ragnama is a book on music. Shaikh Faizullah has discussed in verse the different "Ragas" and "Talas" of Indian

classical music. It shows the depth and breadth of the poet's knowledge of music.

His most well-known work is *Goraksha-Vijay or Gorkha-Vijay*. In some of the discovered manuscripts we find a few colophons by Shyamdas, Bhimdas and Kavindra Das. Some critics have, therefore, concluded that it was composed by Kavindra. But as most of the colophons and as in some manuscripts all the colophons are Faizullah's it is either over-subtlety or an attempt to have Muslim names out of Bengali literature that has prompted these scholars to come to such an unreliable conclusion. One of the significant colophons says that Faizullah heard this story from Kavindra. Faizullah, Bhimdas and Shyamdas must have been later scribes or singers. As usual with such people, they could not resist the temptation of linking up their names with the name of Faizullah. As regards Kavindra, it seems most plausible to conclude that Faizullah was contemporary to Kavindra the well-known composer of the Bengali Mahabharata—the famous poet Kavindra Parameshwara. He composed *Mahabharata Pancali* at the command of Paragal Khan the general of Hussain Shah who conquered Tippera and Chittagong. After conquering these two districts Paragal Khan received titles and honours from the Sultan and began residing in Paragalpur in the north-western most border of Chittagong. His descendants are still living there and his mosque and pond are still reminding the reminiscences of that age. History records that Paragal Khan conquered Tippera and Chittagong in 1517 A.D. It surely took Paragal Khan 15 to 20 years to foster a cultural atmosphere in which literary creations could be possible.

One day while he was listening to the story of the Mahabharata he wanted to listen to Mahabharata Panchali in brief. Kavindra was asked to do it and he must have composed it within 1540 A.D. Had Shaikh Faizullah composed his *Satyapeer* in 1575 (it might have been 1545) he might have met Kavindra. In case *Satyapeer* was composed in 1545, no shadow of doubt should remain regarding this fact. *Goraksha-Vijay* was composed earlier than *Satyapeer*. Shaikh Faizullah may, therefore, have composed it after listening to the story told by Kavindra. All important histories of Bengali literature mention this book and relate the story. It is, therefore, unnecessary to repeat it here.

10. Daulat Wazir Bahram Khan

So far we have found only one work of the poet—*Laili-Majnu*. It is a very long poem. The poet has given a detailed account of his past in the introduction to the book. From it we gather the following facts :—

Hamid Khan, one of the senior courtiers of Husain Shah of Gaud (1493—1519) earned reputation as a wise counsellor and a noble-hearted man. By the order of the king he conquered Chittagong and stayed in that district and carried on with his virtuous deeds. In the meantime Gaud fell in bad days. Hamid Khan also died. After his death several dynasties rose and fell at Gaud. At last Nizam Shah of the Sura dynasty became the king of Chittagong. He had a hundred bodyguards and a large number of white and red elephants. He also built a palace at Chittagong.

Mubarak Khan, a descendant of Hamid Khan was alive at

that time. He was then a well-known figure of that district. Nizam Shah honoured him by giving him the litle of "Daulat Wazir". A few years after receiving this title he died. His son Bahram Khan—our poet—was then a minor. Learning this Nizam was kind enough to bestow his father's title on him. Thus the poet came to be known as "Daulat-Wazir Bahram Khan".

This is a historical fact. Nizampur Pargana of Sitakunda police area in Chittagong is still a well-known place. Many people say that this pargana was named after some Nizam Shah who was its Jaigirdar (Lord). Hence this Nizam Shah is none other than poet's Nizam Shah Sur.

The Suras ruled Bengal from 1539 to 1544. Civil war broke out in Gaud after the death of Nasrat Shah in 1532. It started in 1526 when Mahmud the younger brother of Nasrat Shah declared himself as Abdul Badar and began minting his own "Badar Shahi" coins. This Mahmud later on dethroned and killed Nasrat Shah's son Firuz Shah and ruled at Gaud till 1538. These five years were a period of troubles and turmoil. The Afghan suras rebelled and created trouble. These troubles came to an end when the Suras became the rulers at Gauda. In 1553 Muhammad Khan Sura declared independence and took the title of Shamsuddin Muhammad Shah Gazi and attacked Chittagong. Most probably he conquered at that time from the Arakanese and made Nizam Shah Sura the Governor of the Province. Chaos again ruled the kingdom when Muhammad Khan was killed in a battle at Chaparghat in 1555 A.D. by Himu. It may be that at the time Nizam Shah Sura was for all practical purposes an independent king of Chittagong. From the chronology of these incidents it appears that the poet received his title from Nizam Shah round about 1560 A.D. The poet was probably 15 or 16 at that time, otherwise Nizam Shah would have given him this title. If his *Laili Majnu* was composed after another 15 years, we may assume that its date of composition was 1575 A.D. (roughly).

The poet's forefather—Hamid Khan settled down in Fatehabad near Chittagong. It is a famous village in between Hathazari and Chittagong. It seems that during the poet's days the city of Chittagong extended upto this village. The poet describes the place as a city full of palatial buildings; on one of its sides was the sea, on the other side the Karnaphuli river. The city was surrounded by a ditch.

It may be that Chittagong itself was called Fatehabad after its conquest by Husain Shah. In that case its name would indicate its being a conquered place.

Laili-Majnu is a free translation of Jami's *Laili-Majnu*. In some places it is very close to the original. We have discussed it elsewhere, therefore, we need not repeat our opinions here. It is enough to remark that in poetic quality, stylistic subtlety, sobreity and nobility of sentiments it has no equal in 16th century Bengali literature.

11. Muhammad Kabir

Madhumalati is his only work which has as yet been traced. It was copied by "Shri Abdul Ali of Paragalpur of Chittagong in the month of Vaishakh in Maghi 1101 (1739 A.D.)". I saw this manuscript in the month of March, 1937 in

Jorwarganj (Chittagong, P. S. Sitakundu), but I was not allowed to collect this book. I copied the last few verses which state that this book was written in 997 Hizri or 1588 A.D. But the poet began composing it 5 years earlier, *i.e.*, in 1583 A.D.

Recently there has been some confusion regarding its date of composition. Late Mvi. Abdul Karim Sahitya-visharad d. 1953 wrote to me on the 22nd July, 1949 that he got a copy of this book but could not buy it for want of twenty-five rupees. But he copied the colophon from the last page of this manuscript. He sent me a copy of this colophon. But neither he nor I could make any head or tail of it because in my opinion the copyist had committed some mistake in writing down the symbolic terms. If we slightly alter the words and read them as I read them and interpret them correctly it appears that the manuscript was written in 890 Hizri or 1485 A.D. Hence between the two dates, 1588 and 1485 there is a difference of 103 years. We are now to decide which date is more acceptable.

Vijaygupta and Vipradas Pipilai composed their *Manasa-Mangal* in 1494 and 1495 respectively. Did Kabir then compose his poem earlier than them? There is absolutely no certain answer to this question. We only find that Kabir's language is older than theirs. A few examples are quoted below :—

1. Instead of 'Ke' Kabir uses the older form 'Ka' in the objective case e.g. Kumaraka, Nripatika, etc.
2. He adds '—asi' in the old manner as a suffix to the verb for the 2nd person e.g. Janasi (thou or you know), etc.
3. He uses quite a lot of semi-Prakrit words : e.g.'Keruyal'; Nauali jaubani etc.
4. Everywhere he has used the older forms like 'Neha'; 'Kehne', Banka, etc.

The language of Vipradas and Vijaygupta is comparatively much modern. All these instances are almost totally absent from their poetry.

Another problem about this work is about the origin of its story. Was the story translated from a Persian or a Hindi poem? In some of his colophons he has clearly said that he has put a story originally written in Persian metre into a Bengali metric version. But in one place he says that the original story was in Hindi, he has written it in Bengali Panchali.

All the names except that of Paima (or, as in one place, Fatima) are Hindu names. Though the atmosphere has evolved out of the environment portrayed in Gul-e-Bakawali, the basic atmosphere is Hindu. Most probably the original was in Hindi, some Muslim poet translated it into Persian and it was rendered into Bengali by the Poet. Its story runs as follows :—

Manohar was born of King Suryabhan and Queen Kamala Sundari of the kingdom of Kangira after much prayer and charity. The astrologers foretold that the prince had a bright future, but also added that at the age of fifteen he would fly away from the kingdom in search of a beautiful lady and return later on and rule the kingdom again.

Madhumalati was born of king Vikram Abhiram and Queen Rupasmanjari of the kingdom of Maharas. She was also the only child of the royal couple. She was uncommonly handsome and astrologers had made almost similar pronouncements regarding her future.

When Prince Manohar became fifteen years old king Suryabhan decided to hand over his kingdom to him and enter a forest in order to spend the rest of his life in meditation. The coronation ceremony was completed in time. After the ceremony and its consequent merrymaking were over, Manohar felt tired and fell asleep in a bed in his garden. Just at that time a group of fairies, who had flown over the palace of Madhumalati and seen her asleep in her garden, flew over this garden and saw the prince fast asleep. They could not resist the temptation of comparing the two. So they placed the prince's bedstead by the side of Madhumalati's bedstead. When at dead of night they both woke up and looked at each other they both began thinking that the other must belong to some superhuman race. Madhumalati thought the prince must be some Gandhrava or Indra, the prince thought she must be an angel. Then they began talking and came to know of each other and later on they were so much in love that they exchanged their rings and bedsteads. Later on the fairies returned and found them fast asleep in different beds and took the prince back to his own kingdom.

In the morning they woke up, and finding themselves alone began thinking whether the incident of the night was a fact or a dream. But, they also thought, had it been a dream why were there the ring and the bedstead? This made them

anxious to get each other and they gave up eating and drinking. King Suryabhan and King Abhiram came to know of the conditions of their children.

Manohar started his search with a huge troupe of soldiers. He reached a river bank and found a beautiful boat on the river. He and his soldiers then went on a boat journey. But a storm came and except Manohar who saved himself by clinging to a log, all his soldiers were drowned. When Manohar reached the shore he found a huge forest in front of him. He followed a footpath and went into the forest. There he found a "Tangi" where he met a most beautiful maiden named Paima (Fatema). She was the daughter of King Chandrasen of the kingdom of Jaibahar. She was stolen by a giant who had kept her a prisoner in this Tangi. Manohar began to think that the beauty of one maiden has made him an exile from his own country and the beauty of next was at the point of killing him with love. Manohar killed the giant, saved the maiden and came to know from her that she was a friend of Madhumalati. Manohar then took Paima to her father's house. There he met Madhumalati. But Madhumalati's mother was afraid that she would stain the honour of the family and therefore she changed her into a "shuk" bird. Madhumalati was caught in this form by king Tarachand of Manikyarash—and was returned by him to her father's kingdom. The king found the bird on the house of his female gardener and learnt from Tarachand the history of the bird. The king then brought Manohar from Paima's father's house and married him to Madhumalati.

Our poet's descriptive power is very praise-worthy.

CHAPTER IV

Concluding Remarks on the Literature of Independent Bengal

We discussed in the last chapter the literature and literary figures of Independent Bengal. Though in that discussion we touched upon the themes and styles of the poets, I think it is necessary to have a general discussion on them now.

Viewed as a whole, Muslim Bengali literature is thematically different from Hindu Bengali literature. The religious and cultural difference of the Muslims is the main cause of this difference in literature. Muslim Bengali literature can be roughly divided into six groups :

1. Narrative poems. There are two types :—
 (a) Muslim Narratives :
 Yusuf Zulaikha .. Shah Mohd. Saghir.
 Hanifa-o-Kayra Paree .. Sabirid Khan.
 Saiful Mulk .. Donagazi.
 Laili-Majnu .. Bahram Khan.
 (b) Indian Narratives :
 Manohar Madhumalati Muhammad Kabir.
 Vidyasundar .. Sabirid Khan.
2. Religious poems. They are of three types :
 (a) On Religious Codes :
 Nasihat Nama .. Afzal Ali.
 (b) On Islamic History :
 Rasul Vijay .. Jainuddin.

 Rasul Vijay .. Sabirid Khan.
 Gazi Vijay .. Shaikh Faizullah
 (c) On Hindu History :
 Goraksha Vijay .. Shaikh Faizullah.
3. Poems showing Cultural Affinity :
 (a) *Satyapeer* .. Shaikh Faizullah.
 (b) *Padavalee* .. Chand Qazi, Shaikh. Kabir, Afzal Ali.
4. Elegiacs : *Jainaber Chautisha* Shaikh Faizullah.
5. Poems on Astrology :
 (a) *Sayat Nama* .. Muzammil.
 (b) *Nitishastravarta* .. Muzammil.
6. Poems on Music : *Ragnama* Shaikh Faizullah.

From this list it will be evident that narratives and religious poetry form the largest section of Muslim Bengali literature of this period. Poems on Hindu-Muslim cultural affinity also began to be written. The indication of the growth of a new literature on Muharram and of Jari songs which flourished in a later period is noticeable in *Jainaber Chautisha*. Muslims did not eschew Astrology or music either.

1. Narrative Poetry

It is not strange that the first thing that attracted the attention of Muslims is narrative poetry. Of the discovered writings of Hindus and Muslims, Saghir's *Yusuf-Zulaikha* is the oldest. Secular literature was at that time unknown in Bengal. Hindu writers did not even know how literature could be mainly

imaginative and not religious in spirit. Bengali Muslims were the first to conceive this idea, and a poet like Saghir rose among them. He was conscious of doing something, new of his daring to give aesthetic delight to his readers; that is why he inspired the new age with a new desire—the desire to give pleasure. The first few lines of his poem record this desire. He says that he found the story in the Quran and other Arabic and Persian tales. He has given a new aesthetic turn to the narrative in order to delight the reader. The listeners should listen with rapt attention because in it he had introduced aesthetic sentiments along with religious ones. If his attempt at a religious tale is offensive to some, he is begging them to pardon him for his faults and to remember him for his virtues. This would prove the keen aesthetic sensibility of his readers.

Yusuf-Zulaikha is a tale of love as well as a religious tale. But the poet tells his readers only a tale of love.

This statement shows how far the poet was conscious of poetic beauty. The object of the poet was to give the reader aesthetic delight and not primarily to preach religion. Saghir was followed in his successful attempt by a large number of stalwarts, of whom Sabirid Khan, Donagazi and Daulat Wazir Bahram Khan are the most prominent. *Laili-Majnu* by Bahram Khan and Saiful Mulk by Donagazi are well-known among Muslims. *Laili-Majnu* is unique in its sobriety and poetic quality among works the of the 16th century. Though the story of Hanifa and Kayra Pari is imaginary and a bit fanciful, it is yet a very good narrative because of its imaginative depth, descriptive finesse and construction. Though Donagazi is

a predecessor of Alaol, he is superior to Alaol in simplicity and poetic beauty.

The cultural atmosphere which grew up through the publication of these tales, made Indian tales acceptable to Bengali literature and this acceptance was made possible by Muslims. Muhammad Kabir's *Manohar Madhumalati* and Sabirid Khan's *Vidyasundar* are enough to prove this fact. Though we notice the inclusion of Persian myths about fairies and the influence of Greek mythology in *Manohar Madhumalati*'s story, there is no denying its typical Indian characteristics. Recent research has unearthed a *Madhumalati Katha*, written in 1769 A.D., which proves that this theme was well-known to Hindu writers. Muhammad Kabir's book not only precedes later poems in Bengali on this theme, it is superior to any of the later tales. *Vidyasundara* is of course obviously a Hindu theme. Vilhan, the famous Kashmiri poet mentioned it in his *Chaura Pancashika*. It is of course as yet uncertain whether Kanka of Mymensingh, thought to be a contemporary of Chaitanyadev, was its composer: The *Vidyasundara* tale told in connection with his glorification of Satyapeer is not mainly meant to give us poetic delight. *Vidyasundara* written by Shridhar during the reign of Firuz Shah (1532), was also meant to glorify Goddess *Kali*. *Vidyasundara*, written by Sabirid Khan in a language older than either of the above two, excells in poetic virtues.

2. RELIGIOUS POETRY

It is true that medieval Bengali literature is mainly religious

in outlook and theme. Before the advent of the Muslims, Bengali literature centred round the conflicts between the Hindu Shivites and Vaishnavites. The freedom of thought which followed the preachings of Islam by learned divines, made the Hindus very conscious of their own religion. As a result, literature was affected by a new religious conflict.

This new sentiment gave rise to two types of literature among Muslims: (1) Literature based on Islamic theology and (2) literature which glorified the exploits of Muslim saints and prophets in the same manner in which Hindu gods and goddesses were glorified in Vijay-Kavyas. These Muslim Vijay Kavyas were historical to some extent and mythological to a greater extent; their characters were mostly historical.

So far we have traced only one poem on Islamic theology. Afzal Ali's *Nasihat Nama*. He was also a writer of Padavalis. Afzal Ali was a sufi and, as such, he was followed by Alaol who composed Padavalis in spite of the fact that he had written a theological poem like *Tohfa*. It clearly proves that in those days Muslims had no fear that they would be branded as non-Muslims if they accepted non-Muslim symbols or themes for their poems.

In Bengali *Vijay Kavyas*, the journey of the hero from one place to another symbolises the greatness of some god or goddess. "Vijay" generally means "victory." It also means "superiority" and "journey" or "progress". In Bengali Vijay Kavyas the last two meanings are very prominent. Bengali Muslims too employed the word in both senses. This is evident from the "Rasul Vijay" and "Gazi Vijay" Kavyas written by them. But Muslims did not glorify gods and goddesses as Hindus did because they did not believe in their existence; also because Muslims endowed their saints and prophets with the same miraculous powers as attributed to Hindu gods and goddesses and glorified similar exploits in their Vijay Kavyas.

The impetus to write this type of poems also came from another source. Muslims are well-known for their traditional love of history. Indian history also bears testimony to this. They might have been—however unconsciously—inspired by their historical imagination to compose these Kavyas. That is why they replaced unhistorical, mythical *Vijay Kavyas* of the Hindus by their own historical narratives. Muslim *Vijay* Kavyas are really histories. *Gazi Vijay* written on well-known Peer Ismail Ghazi, is an example. *Gorakhas Vijay* of Shaikh Faizullah, has a similar basis. Gorakhnath was a historical personage, being a Buddhist saint (Siddha). His miraculous deeds are similar to those of our peers and faqirs. By relating his miracles Shaikh Faizullah has commingled history and mythology in his poem. If after describing the Muslim heroes and their exploits in the Shahnama, Firdausi remained a Muslim by virtue of faith and culture, why not Shaikh Faizullah, after writing a *Vijay Kavya* ?

3. Poems on the Affinity of Hindu-Muslim Culture

Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked by an attempt at synthesising the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The circumstances which gave birth to Kavir (1310-1440 A.D.), Nanaka (1469—1539 A.D.) and Chaitanya (1486—1533) in North

India, were also responsible for the composition of poems on the greatness and glory of Satyapeer or Satyanarayan and of Padavalis. Indeed, for some unavoidable circumstances an understanding between Islamic and Hindu cultures was felt as a necessity and this understanding was made possible by the broad-minded preachings of Muslim Sufis and Hindu Saints. Literature reflected this understanding or, rather, a Synthesis of cultures. In Bengali literature this is seen in the narratives of Satyapeer and in Padavali songs.

Tales of Satyapeer form a large part of Bengali literature. Both Hindus and Muslims composed narrative poems on this theme. Shaikh Faizullah is the oldest among them. He composed his poem in "Muni, Rasa, Veda, Shashi" Shakavda. That means he composed it in 1467 or 1497 Shakavda i.e., 1546 or 1575 A.D. We do not understand why Dr. Sukumar Sen has changed it to "Muni, Veda, Rasa, Shashi" date, and thus discerned the date to be 1647 Shakavda or 1725 A.D. Probably he does not believe that any Muslim could have composed a poem in Bengali in the 16th century. But he has said that he saw a manuscript of Faizullah's *Satyapeer*. Uptil now he had denied its existence.

The object of these poems is to glorify Satyapeers. Dr. Sukumar Sen has said that Faizullah's book has some typical characteristics of its own. Being the oldest work on this theme, it is natural that it should have some peculiar characteristics. The worship of Satyanarayan that we find in *Skandapuran's Reva* is a later interpolation—Western research scholars have established this by now and have noticed the influence of Islam on this part of the work. As a matter

of fact the Satyapeer tale is a product of the Synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures. From this point of view it seems that the Muslims, upholding the idea that the spiritual guide is the truth, began composing these poems; Hindus transformed the "Peer" or the guide into Satyanarayana.

Padavali literature also is a product of this blending. It shows the distinct influence of Persian "Ghazaliat" in its structure, imagery and thought. It has been briefly discussed in the second chapter of Part III.

4. Elegiacs

It was not common in Bengal in the 16th century to compose tales on tragic themes, although the English poet sang, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought". When in elegiac poetry Bengali literature had nothing to boast of, Muslim poet Shaikh Faizullah composed *Jainaber Chautisha* and opened a new vista in Bengali literature.

Chautisha or songs of 34 letters is a very old type of poem in Bengali. Just as in Persian the end-rhymes depend on the use of similar letters, so in this kind of poem in Sanskrit, the thirtyfour letters of the alphabet are placed at the beginning of each verse one after another. These poems were in fact hymns in honour of gods and goddesses. From Sanskrit it was introduced into Bengali, but Shaikh Faizullah gave it an entirely new turn. His *Chautisha* records the lamentation of Hazrat Jainab after the tragedy of Karbala. This lamentation gave rise to later Jari songs and poems like *Maktul Husain*.

5. Poems on Astrology

Bengali Muslims pioneered the composition of poems on Astrology. *Sayatnama* and *Nitishastravarta* of poet Muzammil are poems of this category, though this kind of poems hardly ever recorded anything on the Science of Astrology, they recorded for common knowledge, ominous and auspicious dates and similar other matters. In some countries we find among the Sufi books on the knowledge of good and evil foreboding of days and incidents etc. Bengali poems are more or less imitations of these works.

6. Poems on Music

Muslims are famous for their expert knowledge of music and they are also famous for their ceaseless contributions to the storehouse of national music. In Bengali, however, no book on music was written uptil the 16th century when Sheikh Faizullah wrote his *Ragnama*. It is thus the oldest book in Bengali on music. It was probably composed by the end of the 16th century. Its main object was to record examples of the Ragas.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is apparent that the Muslims did not imitate the Hindus in creating their literature. They found out their own path. Hindu literature of this period was *Bhagavata* and the *Mahabharata* or tales of Radhakrishna and other gods and goddesses. The Muslims also composed religious

literature based on the Holy Quran, Hadith and Islamic history. Of course they also wrote poems on love, history, tragedy, astrology and music.

The Hindus and Muslims were influenced by each other directly and indirectly in their compositions. That does not mean that each was partially transferred into the other group. They were living together for such a long time, that mutual influence was but natural. The attempt of the Muslims to learn Sanskrit and of the Hindus to learn Persian also promoted it.

FOURTH PART

Bengali Literature during the Mughal Period

(1576-1757)

CHAPTER I

The Political Background

The Mughal rule in Bengal, extending over one hundred and eighty years (1576—1757), introduced into these parts the characteristic features of Mughal culture, thereby creating a new cultural synthesis. Indeed the literary history of this period is largely a history of this cultural evolution in the wake of political revolution.

We have already seen that in the pre-Mughal period, Gaud, the capital, was the centre of Bengali culture. After Mughal conquest Gaud was detroyed by a great epidemic in 1575. It is recorded that one million, twenty thousand people lived in Gaud at that time. Almost all of them died of plague; only a handful of people succeeded in fleeing to other parts of the country. Among them were some saints and scholars also; their descendants are still known as "Gaudia" in Chittagong. Thus Gaud lost its importance as a cultural centre, but this led to the spread of Bengali language and literature into the remotest parts of Bengal.

For 20 years after the destruction of Gaud, (1575—1595), Tanda was the capital of Mughal Bengal; yet it could not become a cultural centre because of the want of peace in the country. The sinking Afghan power came in conflict with the rising star of the Mughals. Now the Afghans now the Mughals won; but the people had no peace. Raja Mansingh at last shifted the capital of Bengal from Tanda to Rajmahal on the 7th November,

1595 A.D.

During this period a few small principalities were founded, the most important of which were Koochbihar in North Bengal, Malla Rajya in South-West Bengal, Tippera in East Bengal, Kamrup on the North-East border and Arakan in Chittagong. Court patronage kept literary activities alive in these states. Under the local Mughal administration of the internal districts, contemporary literature did not, however, strike any new lines. We find the same old Vaishnava history, the same old Padavali literature, hymns to gods and goddesses, tales of Krishna, Ramayana and Manasa and glorification of religious virtues. But in the border areas, they not only kept up the Gaud tradition, but also ventured into new directions. The chief centres of this activity were the states of Tripura and Arakan.

The first twenty five years of Mughal rule were full of unrest and revolts. In his Chandimangal (composed between 1594 and 1606) Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakarvarty paints a gloomy picture of South Rarh, which was indeed true of the whole of Bengal in those days. Raja Mansingh was at that time, the Subedar of Bengal which the poet describes as the land of chaos. Morality was at a low ebb, famine was rampant and the starving peasantry were selling off their cattle and plots of land.

In short, there was no atmosphere for the growth of culture. Literature remained static; some minor writers were indeed born, but their works were wanting in life and fire, and there is hardly a significant name to mention among them.

Such is the picture of the last thirty years of Akbar's reign (1575—1605), so far as Bengal was concerned. There is an

irony in this, if we remember Akbar's own fascination for arts and learning and the nine illustrious gems of his court. There is no evidence that Akbar ever showed any interest in Bengali language or literature. Akbar's praise has been sung only in one Bengali poem of this period. In his introduction to Chandimangal, the poet Madhav Acharya of Saptagram compares Akbar with Arjuna in prowess and with Brihaspati in wisdom.

It may be interesting to remark here that the poet speaks of Akbar's great power and fine intellect without making any mention of his patronage to arts and learning. It may be that the poet was not among those who profited by it.

It was during the reign of Akbar's successor, Jahangir (1605—1627), that the province began to be well looked after, under the able administration of his Subedar Islam Khan. Islam Khan's first and foremost achievement was to subjugate the Afghan Sardars, the Arakanese Maghas and the Harmad (Portugese) pirates. In order to conduct these campaigns, he transferred his capital from Rajmahal to Dacca in 1612. In a few months the Afghans were subdued, the pirates and Maghas were either killed or captured, and Bengal became a peaceful province of the Mughal Empire.

Henceforth Bengal's cultural identity began to be merged into the broader stream flowing from Agra and Delhi. This led to the establishment of a new cultural tradition. Jahangir ruled for twenty-two years, but has incidently found no mention in Bengali literature.

Shahjahan succeeded Jahangir as the Emperor of Delhi in 1627. In regard to cultural advancement his reign was the golden period of Mughal rule. The architectural

monuments of the Mughals that we still find in Bengal date back to his reign. Bengal was abundantly influenced by Mughal culture under Shahjahan. His reign was also distinguished for good administration. Gadadhar Das, the younger brother of Kashiram Das, the famous composer of the Bengali Mahabharata (1605)—praises Shahjahan in his *Jagannath-Mahatmya* (1645), in very high terms. The poet writes that throughout his reign of fifty years, Shahjahan ruled Bengal with justice and benevolence; all his enemies were subdued and all his subjects were happy.

Here also, it may be noticed, that the poet pays spontaneous tributes to Shahjahan as a good king. He does not seem to be eulogizing him for any personal favour. Though Bengali literature received no direct encouragement from him, the good government that he gave to the country, helped Bengali literature in an indirect way by fostering the growth of a cultural atmosphere.

This atmosphere practically remained undisturbed upto 1757. Even when there was turmoil in Delhi, the Arakanese and the Harmad were not able to disturb the peace of Bengal. Poet Krishnaramdas referring to Shahjahan's successor, Aurangzeb (1657—1707), in his *Kalikamangal* (1676), says that people generally likened him to Rama. Here again Aurangzeb is spoken of as a noble and powerful king rather than as a patron of arts and literature. When Daulat Wazir Bahram Khan's *Laili-Majnu* was copied by a scribe of this period, he added to it a eulogy on Aurangzeb in which he praised the King's great powers, nobility of soul and religiousness. When Azimush-Shan, the grandson of Aurangzeb was the Subedar of

Dacca (1697—1712), Murshid Kuli Khan was appointed the Diwan of Bengal. He was Nayeb-Subedar of Bengal from 1703 to 1717, but quarrelled with the prince and transferred his Diwani to Murshidabad in 1704. When Azimush-Shan relinquished Subedar's office, the capital of Bengal was finally shifted to Murshidabad. From now on, Murshidabad became the centre of Bengali culture.

Aurangzeb's son and successor, Shah Alam, is known to have been a sober, cultured and broad-minded prince. Though his reign was short-lived, it will be remembered as a landmark in the history of Bengali language. Among the coins minted from Shah Alam's royal mint, there was a brass-piece, one side of which bore the Bengali inscription, "Aik Pai Sikka". This is the only surviving evidence of royal recognition of the Bengali language during the Mughal period. But of course, Bengali was used for many semi-official purposes, and appeared in deeds and letters.

Though Murshid Kuli Khan was appointed as the Dewan and Nayeb-Subedar of Bengal, he was the *de-facto* Subedar of the country. From 1717 onwards, he became the legal Subedar too. He ruled Bengal till 1727. Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were at that time under one Subedar. Mughal administration in Delhi was gradually becoming weaker and weaker. The Subedars only paid the annual rent and ruled the lands almost like independent princes. By and by, they even dropped the title of Subedar and styled themselves as Nawabs. The coins struck in the Emperor's name were the only sign of his suzerainty. In this way, Murshid Kuli Khan became the Nawab of Bengal. Leaving no son behind, he was succeeded as Nawab by

his son-in-law, Shujauddin. Upto the days of Suhjauddin's son, Sarfaraz Khan (1739—40), Bengal was ruled by Nawab-Subedars. Later, Nawab-Subedar Alivardi Khan of Bihar, defeated and killed Sarfaraz Khan in battle, and became the Nawab of Bengal. The event has been narrated by the poet Bharat Chandra (1712—1760), in his Annada Mangal. The Emperor honoured the victorious Subedar with the title of Nawab Mahabatjang, receiving in turn costly presents from him. But Alivardi Khan soon stopped paying the taxes to the Royal Treasury and declared himself independent. When he died in 1756 A.D. at the age of eighty, his grandson by his daughter, Sirajuddawla (1756—1757) inherited his throne. Sirajuddawla was ultimately defeated by the English in the battle of Plassey and afterwards captured and assassinated. Thus was the English rule established in Bengal and the Mughal era came to an end.

CHAPTER II

The Cultural Background

The cultural background of this period was different from that of the preceding period. This was partly a natural development and partly a product of Mughal influence. This new culture had so many Mughal features that it was hardly distinguishable from the cultural environments of Delhi and Agra. Architecture and literature alike bore the mark of the Mughals.

The Mughals brought a new fruitful influence to bear on the Indian Muslim culture. One of its significant features was liberalism, manifest in greater social and religious tolerance. Unlike some of their Arab, Turkish or Afghan predecessors Akbar and Jahangir were far from being puritan monarchs. The liberalism went so far that some people even attempted a new interpretation of Tauhid (Unity of God) and other Islamic tenets. It was these heretic tendencies which reformers like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1563—1624) and Aurangzeb himself tried to combat, the latter through his *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*. The opposite trend is typified by Dara Shikoh's *Majma-ul-Bahrain*. It also had repercussions on Muslim Bengali literature.

Another development of religious or spiritual significance was the advent and rise of the Shia sect in India. It came with the Persian troops that helped Humayun to regain his throne; and has flourished ever since. A succession of high Mughal officials professed Shiaism, including some who ruled Bengal.

A number of Shia divines and merchants also came to Bengal by the sea route from Basrah and Bunder Abbas, which were in those days attracting heavy traffic in consequence of the growing trade with the West. Political troubles in Iran further uprooted a large Persian population and many took refuge in Bengal. The Shias were an influential community in Bengal during the times of Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan and his descendant Nawabs. This, in retrospect, is the background of the heroic or semi-religious literature of the type of *Maktul Husain* and *Jangnama*.

The advent of North Indian Sufis and dervishes to Bengal was another important factor in the cultural composition of Muslim Bengal. Most of the earlier Sufis had come to Bengal from outside India. During the Mughal rule there was an even greater influx from North India. The non-Indian Sufis belonged to fourteen main schools or spiritual orders, besides a number of others who were not so organised. The best known of these specific orders are Suhrawardi, Chishti, Qalandari, Madari, Adhami, Naqshbandi and Qadiri groups. The influence of the Qalandaris, Madaris and Adhamis was the most widespread. Hence a few words may be said about them here.

Qalandari: Shaikh Sharafuddin Bu-'Ali Shah Qalandar (d. 1324 A.D.) was the founder of this sect. He flourished in Panipat, where his shrine is situated. Islam does not favour asceticism, hence a good Muslim should not renounce family life. Bu-'Ali, however, preaches asceticism and denounces worldly pursuits in the following terms.

This life and the life after death—can you really gain both at the same time? O thou Selfish one! Do not indulge in this foolish deed. Do you want to get this illusory world and the True Lord at the same time?

This is mere fancy, an impossibility and a madness.

The ascetic disciples of Bu'Ali spread all over Bengal during the 16th and 17th centuries. Their preaching was so effective and their influence was so strong that during the Mughal period, by the word 'Sufi', people understood none but a "Qalandar". In *Chandimangal*, Kavikankan Mukunaram (composed: 1594—1606), referring to Sufis says, "Some become Qalandars and wander about".

Madari : Badi-ud-din Shah-i-Madar was the founder of this sect. He died in Makanpur near Kanpur in Oudh in 1436 A.D. He once visited Bengal, and it is said that Madripur of Faridpur, Madarbari and Madarsa Villages of Chittagong are reminiscent of that visit. One of his disciples named Shah-i-Allah preached his doctrines in Shahr-i-Nau of Gaud. In 1658 A.D. Sultan Shah Shuja granted some rights and privileges to one of the Khalifas of this sect, named Shah Sultan Husain Muria Barhina. These included the right to bring out Madari-*misil* or the procession of the Madaris. In North Bengal an annual festival—*Madarer bans* still takes place, when Madari songs are sung.

Adhami: The world-famous saint, Ibrahim-ibn-Adham, was the founder of this sect. Its followers are known as Khizrias after the name of prophet Khizr—believed invisible and immortal till the Doomsday and sometimes met by the lucky on the banks of rivers. It is not known when this sect came to Bengal. Khizr or Khwaja Khizr became Khizr-peer in Bengal. People living by the riverside, at places like Murshidabad, Nadia,

24-Paraganas, Barisal, Faridpur, Dacca, Mymensingh, Pabna, Chittagong and several other districts believe in the existence of Khizr. When someone is drowned in the river Khizr can save him. Khidirpur of Calcutta and Khizrpur of Dacca on the Laksha-Laikhya river, are reminiscent of Khizrpeer. The *Bera-Bhasan* festival was held in his honour until some time ago. It had gained official recognition during the Mughal period. Mukarram Khan, the Subedar of Dacca (1626—1627) patronized this festival. When Murshid Kuli Khan was Nawab of Bengal (1704—1727), *Bera-Bhasan* again became an official festival. These facts would show the importance once gained by this sect in Bengal.

Several mystic works were written during this period in Bengal. A rather flexible attitude towards religious beliefs is visible in the poems on *Satyapeer* or *Satyanarayan* by Hindus and *Yoga Qalandar* by Muslims would not otherwise be written. Not so valuable as literary creations, these poems, nevertheless have a historical importance.

The Persian language was widely cultivated in Bengal during the Mughal rule. Though Persian was the court language even before the Mughals, the language used at rituals and ceremonies was usually Arabic. We are informed by some historians that Persian never appeared on coins or commemorative inscriptions. Arabic was the favourite language of the elite, Persian, the language of the court and Bengali was used for everyday conversation. The Hindus, on the other hand, were more attached to Sanskrit but both the Hindus and the Muslims spoke Bengali. Interestingly enough, we find Bengali words inscribed on a cannon of Isa Khan's which he probably carried when he

revolted against Akbar. The inscription is as follows :—

"*Sarkar Shrijut Isa Khan*
Masnad-adali Sana hajar 1002—1595 *A.D.*"

During the Mughal period, however, Persian reigned supreme not only in the court but almost in every walk of life. There is hardly a single Arabic inscription dating from the Mughal period. Persian was the language of the cultured classes: it was inscribed in the mosques and on coins, spoken in the court, and written in revenue records etc., etc. The social and educational status of a man was judged from his knowledge of Persian. It was the best recommendation for service of the crown. Hence the Hindus and the Muslims all laboured to learn Persian. It was natural, therefore, that Muslim Bengali literature of these days should take colour from Persian language and literature. The political diction of the Muslim poet Alaol (1607—1680) and the Hindu poet Bharat Chandra (1712—1760), bears obvious marks of Persian influence.

Touching upon the conditions in Hindu society, it may be mentioned that the Gaudian form of Vaishnavism got a new life in this age. For nearly half a century after the death of Chaitanya in 1533, Vaishnavism was for all practical purposes a dormant force. Chaitanya, Nityananda and Adwaita were pioneers of this movement. Then after a lapse of half a century, Shrinivasha (1522—1608), Narottama (1531—1611) and Shyamananda (1535—1630) revived and revitalised it. Prominent works of Vaishnava literature include *Bhaktiratnakar*, *Premavilasa*, *Narottama-Vilasa* and *Anuragavali*. The Vaishnava preachers

exercised a great influence upon the common people of Bengal, with the result that Bengali folk songs, like the Bhatialis, Baul songs, Murshidas and Gambhiras, came to have a touch of the Kirtanas. Radha and Kanu were profusely alluded to in these songs. From the late 16th century to the 18th century, there was an effusion of Vaishnava *padas* or songs written by poets like Jnanadas Govindadas, Balaram Das, Narottama Das, Kavishekhara and Kaviranjan. Kirtanas, written and sung in Reneti, Gadanhati, Manohar Sain and such other well-known tunes, were very popular. These were compiled and are still preserved. Some of the collections are, Radhamohan Thakur's *Padamrita Samudra*, Vaishanava Das's *Padakalpataru* and Gaurasundar Deb's *Sankirtanananda*, compiled early in the 18th century. Biswanath Das's *Gitachintamani* is the earliest *pada* collection of Bengal, containing the *padas* of some forty-five poets. It was compiled in the last quarter of the 17th century. A few collections were also made by Muslim compilers of which Fazil Nasir Muhammad's *Ragmala* is the best-known. He was commissioned upon this by Wahid Muhammad, Zamindar of Sultanpur, Chittagong in 1089 Maghi or 1727 A.D. His anthology contains *padas* by some Muslim poets also.

Another historical momentous event of this period was the coming of the Portuguese, their first sailor named Dom Joao-da-Silveira reaching Chittagong in 1518. During Sultan Muhammad Shah's reign (1533—38), some Portuguese messengers were sent to Gauda, but the Sultan did not accept their credentials. On 30th April, 1559 A.D., they entered into a pact with Raja Parmananda Ray of Bakarganj (Baklataj) obtaining trade concessions. Later in the 17th century, they gained a further footing in this country through the encouragement of the Bhuiyans (Zamindars) of Bakla (Barisal), Sandikan or Chandikan (Jessore) Shripur (Dacca), Bhulua (Noakhali), Katrabhu (Mymensingh-Dacca) and some other places. The Portuguese established "Kuthis" in Tamluk, Hijli, Hoogli (Porto-pequeno) Dacca, Chittagong (Porto-Grande) etc., which were their trade establishments. This is how the Portuguese influence gradually spread over Bengal.

The trouble that the early Portuguese pirates gave our people, is well known. The word "Harmad" which is a variation of "Armada" is reminiscent of the same. They are mentioned at two places in the 17th century literature. Mukundaram Kavikankan recorded their cruelties in *Chandimangal* (composed 1594—1606) and Alaol has described their gruesome adventures in his *Padmavati* (composed-1651).

Still it would be wrong to say that the Portuguese did nothing but plunder and assassination in this country. In fact, they soon associated themselves with our political, religious and cultural life, and their influence in these spheres gradually increased. Our soldiers as well as zamindars were in close contact with them. Portuguese churches went up by the side of the mosques. Unlike other Europeans, they did not avoid native company, but freely mixed with the people and even married here, thus giving rise to a new Eurasian community, which is known as "Tansh-Firingi" or "brown Christians".

Incidentally, the Portuguese were the first to introduce prose literature in Bengali, which hitherto only used poetry in literary productions. This they did in order to preach Christianity.

Father Sosa translated a Christian missionary work into Bengali prose in 1599, which is now lost; but we still have a Bengali work called *Brahman-Roman-Catholic-Sangbad* written by a Hindu who was converted by the Portuguese in 1663 and given the Christian name of Dom-Antonio-da-Rozario. The Portuguese priest, Manoel-da-Assumpacao, transliterated that book into Roman Script. He also wrote another missionary book in Bengali viz; the prose *Crepar Sastrer Ortho Bhed* and compiled the first Bengali grammar and the first Bengali Dictionary. These two books were printed in 1743, at Lisbon.

Thus the influence of the Portuguese on Bengali culture was very considerable indeed. The Portuguese were also the first to introduce the cultivation of Tobacco (Portuguese; Bengali: tamak) and potatoes (Port: *Patata*) in Bengal, which they imported from South America, and brought cashew-nuts (Port: *acajoba*) from Brazil. They also brought papaya (Portuguese), *Anannas* (pineapple); *carmbola* (Bengali *Kamranga*), guava (Port: *Gunyava*,) and several other fruits and nuts from other places of the world. Words like verandah (Port: *Varanda*); *Janela* (window) *chabi* (keys); *balti* (pail, Port: *Blada*); *mesa* (floor), *Talha* (Towel); Alpin (Port: Alfinete) *Saban* (Soap, Port: *Sabao*) are gifts to our language from the Portuguese.

A study of the literature of this period would be incomplete without a reference to these historical developments and their consequent influence on culture.

CHAPTER III

The Poets of the Mughal Period

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of our past literature still awaits to be rediscovered by our scholars and literary critics. But the earnest efforts of some scholars, especially the late Moulvi Abdul Karim, have already brought to light a vast wealth of manuscripts belonging to the Muslim writers of Bengal. These documents reveal the large number of Muslim poets that flourished in the Mughal period and the vast extent of their works. We have freely drawn upon this material. The present writers' own collection has also helped him. Moulvi Ali Ahmad Saheb's list of Bengali manuscripts as well as a compilation of Professor Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya on Muslim Vaishnava poets, are also valuable in this connection.

It is hardly possible to discuss the works of all the poets of this period within the short compass of this volume. We shall, therefore, deal with the most important writers only. Our approach cannot be called exhaustive, but our idea is to reconstruct a picture of the general literary scene as it existed from age to age, and we hope that we succeed in this.

An eighteenth century poet, Muqim of Noapara—a village in Chittagong—is incidentally very helpful in establishing the literary chronology of this period. His *Faizul Muqtadi*—the last of his works—was composed in 1773 A.D. He probably lived from 1700 to 1780; he has named many foregoing and

contemporary poets of Chittagong. There is internal evidence in the book that it was composed about the time of the English occupation of Chittagong, *i.e.* 1760, when they received a Sanad from Mir Qasim. The *Gul-e-Bakauli* was probably composed between 1760 and 1770. Among his forerunners Muqim mentions Sayyid Sultan, Muhammad Khan, Daulat Qazi, Alaol, Abdul Nabi, Gyasak (Gyas Khan), Muzammil, Mabut Raza, Sek Paran, Paragal, Fazil Nasir, Tahir, Ali Muhammad and Kannu; and among his contemporaries, Shah Ali Raza, Hari, Ali Mian, Muhammad Mukim and Shreejut Danish Qazi. This list is valuable because it helps us to ascertain the approximate dates of many poets of Chittagong.

We have tried to place the poets in the right historical perspective, as this was important for a study of the evolutionary process, which is the purpose of this volume. We cannot be too certain of our dates, but we hope that the investigations of the present author would be helpful for further research.

Sayyid Sultan (1550?—1648?)

Sayyid Sultan is one of the oldest known poets of Bengal. He has given some account of himself in his poem, the *Shab-i-Meraj*. The relevant extract is quoted below :—

Laskar Paragal Khan Agni shire dhari !
Kavindra Bharat Katha Kahila viehari ! !
Hindu Musalman taye ghare ghare pare !
Khoda rasulera katha keha na sonare ! !
Graha shata rasa joge avda gonailo !

Deshi bhashe ehi katha keha na kahilo ! !
Arbi Farsi bhashae kitab bahuta !
Alimane bujhe na bujhe murkhasuta ! !
Dukkha bhavi mone mone krilung thik !
Rasulera katha jatha kahimu adhik ! !
Laskarer purakhani Alim vasati !
Muin murkh achi ek sayyad santati ! !
Alimane pade ami magi parihar !
Khomiva paila dosh na kari gohar ! !
Sayyad Sultan Kahe kene bhavi mara !
Sahay Rasula jar tarive sagara ! !

This is the only document from which we can determine his dates. How to interpret the symbolical expression "Graha Shata Rasa Joge" is the crucial question, which only Dr. Shahidullah has been able to answer convincingly. He was the first to point out to the teacher-disciple relationship between Sayyid Sultan and Muhammad Khan. Further, by comparing a few older as well as contemporary manuscripts, he has established that "Joge" was "Juge", and thus ascertained his dates, besides bringing to light a few other points. Thus, we understand that the poet composed his Shab-i-Meraj in "Graha Shata Rasa Juge" which can be interpreted as follows :—

Graha Shata=900
Rasa=9(both 9 and 6 are acceptable but 9 seems more correct)

Jug=4

994 Hijri era=1588 or 1586 A.D.

So the Shab-i-Meraj was composed in 1586 A.D. Assuming that he was about 35 years of age in that year, he was probably born about 1550 A.D. He lived long; else he would not have left behind such prolific works. Further, knowing his successors and the disciples of his successors, we are led to conclude that his death occurred nearabout 1648 A.D. This gives him a total life span of 98 years, which is quite credible. It is indeed a reliable estimate that agrees with other known facts, as we shall soon discuss.

Muhammad Khan who was Sayyid Sultan's disciple composed *Kiyamat Nama* in obedience to the command of his teacher. His first book, *Satyakali Vivad-Sangbad* was composed in "*Dasha Shata Vana Shata Vana dasha Dadhi*" Shakavda, or 1557 Shakavda or 1635 A.D. Granting that he was 35 years of age at that time, he must have been born about 1600 A.D., when Sayyid Sultan was 50 years of age. Muhammad Khan completed the *Kiyamat Nama* in 1646 A.D. He says that *Navi Bangsha* was composed by a renowned person, who could not, however, finish the work, but commanded him to do so, by writing on the "Rasuler Ofat", or the death of the Prophet.

Peer Shah Sultan is the kindest of all masters;
He loves his disciples; and is like the sea, a storehouse of pearls, in respect of virtue;
Putting his command over my head as a garland,
I, Muhammad Khan speak in Panchali.

(Maqtul Husain)

That Sayyid Sultan did not live long after 1646, may be concluded from the fact that he could not finish his work and had to ask Muhammad Khan to complete it after him. Muhammad Khan says :—

He could not complete his work on the Prophet's death,
And at last asked me to do so.
In obedience to his command,
I have composed these padavalis about the four As'hab.
And after telling the story of the two heroic brothers,
I have narrated the story of the Doomsday.
Lastly I speak of the Beatific vision.
There is nothing more to write about.
If the two panchalikas are placed side by side,
The beginning and the end will be joined together.

(Kiyamat-nama)

If Sayyid Sultan died two years after the composition of Kiyamat-nama in 1646, we can conclude that he lived in between 1550 to 1648 A.D.

There has also been a controversy about the poet's birthplace. Recent research has at last established it that he was born at Chakrashala pargana in Chittagong. His successor Muqim tells us that he belonged to the Mir family of Chakrashala and was a Peer himself. Also, Muzaffar who composed the passage about Hanifar Patrapath in Maqtul Husain, describes himself as the grandson of Sultan and a resident of Chakrashala. There is little doubt that Sayyid Sultan belonged to Patia P.S. in Chittagong. Sayyid Sultan himself names his village as

"Lashkarer Pur" which means Lasker's town, or actually Laskar Paragal Khan's town *i.e.*, Paragalpur. It seems that Sayyid Sultan temporarily resided there to meet his disciples and may have composed his *Shab-i-Meraj* at that place. What he says is "*achhi*", meaning "I am staying". He does not say that this was his permanent home.

We do not know exactly how much he wrote; but we have the following works to his credit :—

1. *Nabi Bangsha*
2. *Shab-i-Meraj*
3. *Rasul Vijay*
4. *Ofat-e-Rasul*
5. *Joykum Rajar Ladai*
6. *Iblis-Nama*
7. *Jnan-Chautisha*
8. *Jnan Pradip*
9. *Marfati Gan*
10. *Padavali*

We have to content ourselves with brief notes about these works

1. *Nabi-Bangsha* : This may be called his magnum opus. It outstrips the *Ramayana* in variety, scope and size. It was indeed a great Bengali model of an epic. Superficially it might appear to be giving a rather unworthy picture of Islam, because he has used the word "avtar" to describe the prophets. But he did not in fact subscribe to the "avatarbad" or the Hindu belief in Incarnation. Quite to the contrary, the poet is preaching "Tauhid" or the Islamic conception of the Unity of God. He used the familiar Bengali word "avatar" with a poetic flair, as a means to glorify the prophet to the heathen masses in the language they understood better. Likewise in his Nabi-Bangsha, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar and Hari or Krishna are called avatars or Nabis (prophets) who received from God the

Sama, the Jaju, the Rik and the Atharva scriptures, as it were—but since "Shruti" or revelation stopped, these Vedas were thrown into the sea. Adam, Shish, Idris, Noah, Ibrahim, Musa, Daud, Sulaiman, Isa and Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) were then sent down to the Earth to preach 'Tauhid'. According to the poet, the four Vedas prophesied the advent of Prophet Muhammad. It is a common Muslim belief that the *Taurait*, the *Zubur*, the New testament and all other revealed scriptures were annulled by the Quran as they had suffered much change. The poet entertained similar notions about the Hindu scriptures.

Whatever may be said about the theology of *Nabi-Bangsha*, the book was expressly written with a view to propagating the principles of Tauhid. The poet says :

O men and women, lend your ears to Sayyad Sultan,
Pay deep heed to this Hindi *Nabi-Bangsha*,
Which was in Arabic, but he translated it into Hindi;
So that the people of Bengal might understand it.
The Bengalees failed to receive knowledge of their religion due to their failure to understand Arabic,
But they managed to pick up (un-Islamic) rituals from the Hinduistic language.

(Nabi-Bangsha)

The scope of the work is too wide to admit of a detailed discussion. He begins with an imaginative description of the birth of the universe and ends his accounts with the birth of the Prophet. It is interspersed with the tales of Brahma, Vishnu,

Maheshwar, Narasinha, Bamana, Rama, Krishna, Adam, Shish, Nooh, Ibrahim, Moosa, Isa and other prophets. It is not a translation of the *Qasas-ul-Ambia*, but an original poetic work of that type. In *Shab-i-Meraj* the poet describes the theme of the poem in the following terms :

Know then, that I am your well-wisher.
I have given the message of *Imam* and Islam.
And described the creation of the three worlds:
Of the angels and devils,
Of Adam and Eve,
And the advent of the prophets,
These were unknown to the people of Bengal;
They learnt them from the *Panchali* of *Nabi-Bangsha*.
(Shab-i-Meraj)

(a) The subject-matter of *Nabi-Bangsha* did not easily lend itself to poetic treatment. It was a religious book—difficult grounds for the Muse to tread. Yet his poem is a fine example, of medieval poetry, which impresses by its richness of ideas, play of imagination, mellifluous language and highly effective rhythm. As an example, we may refer to the description of the separation of Adam and Eve. This is in the form of "Baramashi"—a form of lamentation in which each month of the year is invoked and appears in all its glory, making the plight of the forlorn beauty more pathetic by contrast. The diction is highly metaphorical.

(b) *Shab-i-Meraj* : This poem has a special importance because of the autobiographical passage quoted above, from

which we concluded that it was written in 994 Hijri or 1585—86 A.D. The Poet's long apologia for writing on a religious subject in Bengali, further reveals the orthodox outlook of those days.

This too is a bulky book. Its main theme is the spiritual ascent of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The descriptions of Heaven and Hell as seen by the Prophet and of the angels and Prophets he met, his conversation with them and many other imaginative details, account for the length of the poem, but they lend a great variety to the narrative. The poet also relates the birth of the Prophet and other events of his life. On the night of the "Meraj" Gabriel comes to the Prophet with the *Buraq* which is to take the Prophet to God; but the Prophet does not recognise him. So, the angel proudly introduces himself thus:

If I were not by Abraham's side,
He would be burnt by the flaming Fire;
When the Pharaoh chased Moses
To drown him into the Sea—
If I were not with him,
He could not have walked through the waters.
I was with the prophet Jesus,
When the Jews sent him up the Cross:
It was I who hid him from their eyes;
I cast an illusion and they killed a jew instead.
There never was a Prophet,
Whom I did not visit on errand.
My name is Gabriel, Sir,
Come from God in obedience to His command.

The Prophet ascended with Gabriel, past the Heaven and Hell. In describing the *Huris* in Heaven, the poet takes an excursion into the realm of romance and paints physical beauty with great gusto.

(c) *Rasul-Vijay* : The poem comprises 108 pages of manuscript. It also contains a list of his other writings like *Nabi-Bangsha* and Shab-i-Meraj. It describes the Prophet's holy battles. A similar work by Zainuddin may be compared with this poem.

(d) *Ofat-i-Rasul* : Compared to other works of Sayyid Sultan, this is a small book, comprising no more than 25 sheets. Moulvi Abdul Karim regarded it as a part of *Nabi-Bangsha*, but it is a complete work by itself, though no doubt a part of the larger scheme which Sayyid Sultan had in view. The scheme comprised the following works :—

1. *Nabi-Bangsha* : Traditions from the creation of the world to the attainment of Prophethood by Hazrat Muhammad.
2. *Shab-i-Meraj* : An account of the spiritual attainments of the Prophet.
3. *Rasul Vijay* : Preaching of Islam by the poet since the date of Meraj.
4. *Ofat-i-Rasul* : The passing away of the Prophet.

The *Ofat-i-Rasul:* is his latest verse and bears obvious marks of a decline in the poet's powers. In spite of the pathetic possibilities inherent in the subject, the poem fails to stir our feelings.

Even where the angel (*Azrail*) approaches the Prophet and the Prophet gets restless out of solicitude for his followers, the verse fails to strike a really tragic note.

(e) *Jaykum Rajar Larai* : It is a small poem of 18 pages which describes the battle between Jaykum, an infidel king and Hazrat Muhammad, with Hazrat Ali beside the Prophet. Rather than being an independent work, it seems to be a part of his large works, the *Rasul Vijay*.

(f) *Iblis-Nama* (or *Noor-faramush Nama*) : This is again a rather small poem consisting of about 350 lines and composed throughout in *Payar*. This poem was written soon after *Nabi-Bangsha*, as we learn from the author in the beginning of Shab-i-Meraj, where he says :

> I have sung of the glory of the Prophets
> And also of Satan's disgrace,

alluding obviously to Nabi-Bangsha and Iblis-Nama. He develops these two morals in this work: (1) The *peer* or spiritual preceptor is at all times worthy of the disciple's devotion. (2) The chief cause of the downfall of the great is pride. This is illustrated by the fall of Satan—the most accomplished of all God's angels; who fell, because he proudly disobeyed God's command to bow before Adam. In spite of his degradation, God commands the angels to show reverence to Satan, who was their teacher. The poet comments in the conclusion :

> Even if the disciple be an angel,
> And the Teacher a very Satan,

The disciple should not think ill of the Teacher, but obey him:

Such was the Lord's command to the Angels.
He desired them to be respectful to Iblis, their teacher.
Know this and never speak ill of your teacher,
Never be vain or proud in his presence.

(g) *Jnan-Pradip* : This poem too preaches *Yoga-Qalandar* but it belongs to his late years. The poet by that time had become a disciple of Peer Shah Husain, and well-versed in mystic lore. In this book we find the Islamic and Hindu mysticisms, treated side by side. He owed his knowledge of these systems to his Peer and acknowledges this :—

"Peer Shah Husain is like an ocean,
I received this wealth of wisdom from him".

He propounds the view that mystic knowledge is not within the reach of the common man. One cannot be a mystic merely by reading about mysticism, but by sitting at the feet of a Peer. Wherever in his discourse Sayyid Sultan comes to a point which he is forbidden to disclose, he asks his readers to go to "Premananda", who is none else but his *peer*.

The core of his teaching in Jnan-Pradip corresponds to the saying of the Holy Prophet: "If thou wishest to know God, know thyself". The poet starts with observations on the human form and proceeds to describe the spiritual states known as Lahut, Nasut, Jabrut, Malakut etc. Then he speaks of Zikr, Rabita, Moraqiba and such other mystic processes.

(2) *Marifati Songs* : Most of the mediaval saints were poets. Their poems are preserved in collections called "Diwans" or "Kulliyats". The poet-saint Sayyid Sultan, too, composed many Marifati (mystic) poems. Though they were not separately compiled, they are included in other general anthologies.

(3) *Padavali* : Besides writing mystic verse, Sayyid Sultan also composed *Padavalis* which were then very popular. Some of these songs have been preserved in "*Ragmala*".

Sayyid Sultan belonged to Chakrashala (in Patia, P.S.) of Chittagong. He lived, roughly from 1550 to 1648 in Paragalpur. His peer or Preceptor was Shah Husain and among his disciples the most famous was Muhammad Khan. Another of his disciples Fateh Khan, too, is well-known as a writer of *Padas*.* Sayyid Sultan was a versatile man, being a poet, historian and composer of songs. Though, due to environmental influences, we see a blending of Hindu and Muslim ideas in his writings, he mostly preached Islamic ideals. At one place he calls it a misfortune for the Bengali Muslims to be born in Bengal, because they did not have access to Arabic—the language of their religion (Shab-i-Meraj). He composed *Nabi Bangsha*, *Shab-i-Meraj*, *Iblis-Nama*, *Rasul-Vijay* and several other books and poems which are all religiously inspired. But this made him unpopular with the orthodox section of the people. Says the poet :—

"Ignorant of their own language,
People blame me for composing *panchalis*.
Thay call me a turncoat

*(vide: Banglar Vaishnav-Bhavapanna Kavi—by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya).

And say I have Hinduised the Islamic Scriptures".
(Shab-i-Meraj)

This did not, however, damp his enthusiasm :

"The Almighty knows that I mean it all for the best,
Him alone I am to answer".

He carried on his mission. But it appears from the above that to preach Islam in Bengali was thought to be profane by the orthodox in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The poet had to fight this narrow-minded outlook all his life.

Shaikh Paran (1550?—1615?)

No thorough study of this poet has yet been made. The present writer has been able to find only two of his works, *Nur-nama* and *Nasihatnama*. Neither of these have an indication of the date of composition, but it does not seem difficult to know the probable dates. He was the father of Shaikh Muttalib, himself a poet. Shaikh Muttalib's *Kifayat-ul-Musallin* was composed, according to his chronogram, in 1049 Hijri or 1639 A.D. Shaikh Muttalib was orphaned in his childhood, that is why, he says, he could not get a regular education. He was inspired to write his *Kifayat-ul-Musallin* by Maulvi Rahmatullah, from whom too he got the material for the work. The Maulvi Saheb fed him and clothed him and taught him also, for a long time. If we assume that the poet was 39 in 1639 A.D., he was born round about 1600 A.D. If his father died when he was 14 or 15, Shaikh Paran could not have been alive after 1615, but he was surely living in 1600 A.D.

The poet Shaikh Paran was a contemporary of Sayyid Sultan. He alludes to Sayyid Sultan and his *Nabi-Bangsha* in his *Nur-nama* when he says,

Sayyad Sultan has already related in *Nabi Bangsha*
All that the noble Ali said to Fatima.

So he leaves out that discourse from his narrative. That he was a resident of Sitakundu in Chittagong is also stated by Shaikh Muttalib:

Noble Shaikh Paran lived in Sitakunda;
Says his humble son, Shaikh Muttalib

In *Nur-nama* or "*Roz-i-Azal*" the story of Creation has been described. According to it, first the Light of Muhammad and then the universe were created. It is primarily a religious work, and not very poetic.

Nasihat-nama is not an original composition, but a translation of some Persian poem or collection of Persian sayings, which he rendered into Bengali for the benefit of the common people, as the poet himself says.

Haji Muhammad (1550?—1620?)

We hardly knew anything about this poet, till Moulvi Abdul Karim published a commentary on his book *Nur-Nama*; but not enough about the poet himself is known.

Haji Muhammad was a contemporary of Shaikh Paran and

Sayyid Sultan and probably somewhat older than both. Shaikh Paran speaking of him in his *Nasihat-nama*, praises his masterly description of the essentials of *Iman* in *Suratnama*.
Thus Haji Muhammad was a predecessor of Shaikh Paran, or perhaps an older contemporary of him. We have assumed here that he was a contemporary of Shaikh Paran who probably flourished between 1550 and 1620.

From Shaikh Paran's reference quoted above, it is apparent that Haji Muhammad had written another poem besides his *Nur Jamal viz.*, *Surat-nama*, which treated of faith (Iman) and other religious doctrines.

Nur Jamal discusses *Shariat* and *Tariqat* or *Marifat*, the religious and mystic rules of conduct. The first part discusses several laws of the *Shariat* of which, as an example, we may quote what he writes on "Tawba" or Repentance :

O Ye who say your prayers,
Learn that without Repentance all prayers are fruitless.
Those of you who have committed sins should repent here and now,
And not hereafter.
God will forgive your sins, if you repent
And never commit those sins again.

In the second part he discussed "Tariqat". He describes the trials which one must undergo before he can pass through the several stages of mystic experience such as, *Lahut*, *Nasut*, *Malakut* etc. He also elucidates the significance of these stages. As an example, we may quote from what he says about the

stage of mystic evolution, called *Malakut* :

Nur Jamal tells you about esoteric realities :
The mind does not stray about, but is obsorbed in the thought of Allah,
And is steadfestly attached to the Lord.
It is deeply immersed in truth,
Forgetting even its own existence.

"Nur" or "Light" is of two types—Jalal and Jamal. The experience of *Jalal* is too strong for the soul and may be avoided, but *Jamal* is bright and pleasant and should be sought. So the poet has styled the poem as *Nur Jamal*. In the above quotation, the poet tells how the soul can attain to the state of the angels (Maqam-i-Malakut).

The poet also discusses the mystic conceptions of "Tauhid-i-Wujudi" (unity of existence) and Tauhid-i-Shahudi" (unity of God). In the late 16th and early 17th centuries these conceptions gained currency in North India. In the poet's belief, the Creator and the created are one and the same and still distinguishable. The theory is a mixture of the Duality and Unity theories. The poet says :

The Primal Light is manifest in both Zat and Sifat;
Its name is Nur-i-Muhammad.
God called him his friend,
And through him He created the Universe.
One became two and two became All,
Just as out of the seed grows the tree, from the tree comes

the fruit—
Fruit, tree and seed are the three names of a unity;
One becomes Three, Three becomes one.
They are inseparable.
But the fruit cannot be called the tree.
Such is the relationship between God and his creatures;
Creation emanates from God.
Just as the fruit is different from the tree,
God is different from Man.

The question is posed: "If God and Man are inseparable entities, can the death of man mean the death of God?" The poet answers that the sea and its waves are not the same, and yet the waves are but a manifestation of the sea. The waves rise and fall. But the falling of waves does not mean the destruction of the sea. So, man may die, but God is everlasting.

The behaviour of Man does not hurt God;
The end of His creatures does not mean His end;
He was, He is, and He will always be.

The poet was a devout Muslim. He also performed the Hajj pilgrimage, which in those days was a real ordeal. He was also a *peer* with a circle of disciples, one of whom was Mohammad Shafi.

The book is full of exhortations for the Muslims. He has also discussed, in his own way, the purpose of poetry, that is, the contemporary ideas about the poet's art.

Nasrullah Khan

(1560?—1625?)

This poet too has remained in oblivion, except for Moulvi Abdul Karim's mention of him in his "*Bangla Prachin Punthir Vivaran*". We have been able to discover four of his works, which are :

(a) *Jang-nama.*
(b) *Musar Sawal.*
(c) *Shariat Nama.*
(d) *Hidayet-ul-Islam*—(The present writer has not yet seen this book).

Of these, *Janganama* and *Shariat-nama* include autobiographical accounts; but, unfortunately, none of his works give any indication of the date of composition, though we can very nearly guess the dates in the light of the autobiographical remarks occurring in them. The *Shariatnama*, for instance, gives the following account :—

Hamiduddin Khan was a Shikdar of two "shiks" in Gaud, where he served as the Commander-in-Chief. His son, Burhanuddin Khan went to Rosang with eight of his friends. As the King of Rosang (Nripamukhya) had no cavalry, he made him the Commander of his infantry. Ibrahim Khan was appointed in his father's place. His son Shujauddin Khan in his turn stepped into his post; but his son Babu Khan (Shek Raja) became a saint, known as "Fakir Modal". His son, Ishaq Khan, began teaching as a *Khondkar*, and had the title of "Sharif" conferred on him; Nasrullah was his son.

Thus we find that Nasrullah Khan's forefathers came to Rosang and became the "Laskar-wazirs" of "Nripamukhya" or Nripraranka". Now the question is, who was Nripamukhya? An investigation into Arakan's history discloses that he was none other than *Narameikhla* of Burmese history and *Mengtsa-umwun* of Arakan. He ruled Arakan from 1404 A.D. to 1434 A.D. After ascending the throne he forcibly carried away *Ananthiu* the sister of a vassal king of Burma and was later on driven away from his kingdom by the king of Burma, as a punishment for this outrage. He spent his days in Gaud as an exile till 1430, when he was re-established in his Kingdom by Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah. Probably this was the time when Burhanuddin became his Lashkar-wazir. Allowing 100 years for four generations, 175 years must have passed since Nasrullah was born. He was thus probably living in 1605.

Comparing the autobiographical details given in the *Jang-nama*, we obtain almost the same date. According to that work, his father Mansur Khan Khondkar was honoured by King Fath Khan (mentioned by the poet as Fate Khan), King of Ramtu (probably Ramhu or Ramu), a place in the south of Chittagong. The king who conquered Rosang with the help of the troops loaned by the Emperor of Delhi, similarly honoured him.

This Fath Khan is a well-known historical figure. He was a captain in the Portuguese Naval force. He rebelled sometime between 1600 and 1608 A.D. and captured the most important Portuguese stronghold of *Sandwip*. At that time Ganjalis, the Portuguese pirate leader ruled *Sandwip* and the adjacent areas North and South of Chittagong. Fath Khan put the Portuguese

garrison to sword after conquering Sandwip. Ganjalis was at that time engaged in piracy in South Shahbazpur in Bakharganj district. In a battle which took place between Fath Khan and Ganjalis in 1609, Fath Khan was killed and Ganjalis became the unrivalled ruler of *Sandwip* as well as North and South Chittagong. Just at that time, a Royal family named Annapuram sought Ganjalis's protection, following a civil war in Arakan. Later on he went to Delhi. Ganjalis was driven out of Chittagong to Goa by the King of Arakan, in 1616, and was for ever banished from the history of Bengal.

This proves that the poet's father was alive between 1600 and 1616. The poet must have been a middle-aged man at that time. Therefore, if the poet was nearly 60 to 65 years of age, in 1625, he must have been born about 1560 or 1565.

The poet was an inhabitant of Ramu area of Chittagong. His *Peer's* name was Hamid-ud-deen. He mentions him respectfully at several places in the *Janganama*. In those days there was a big market called Kassimbazar, in Chittagong; and there also stood a high hill there, called *Jahan-numa*. The hill was so called because people could see far and wide from its top.

We may now discuss his works one by one.

(a) *Janganama* : This appears to be his first work. The poet himself says :—

> Virtuous Sharif Mansur, born of Saidani,
> His son Nasrullah yet half-learned and immature, has composed panchalies.

The word "immature" here seems to refer to his young age; though it may be that it was used as an expression of humility.

However, the style of the poems itself bears, marks of immaturity.

The subject matter is a common place one. The main purpose of the poet is to describe the battle of the lion-hearted Ali on the side of Hazrat Muhammad against the infidels. It is of the same type as Rasul-Vijay. There are many supernatural happenings too. Though the use of the metre cannot be called perfect, yet his knowledge of prosody seems to be sound.

(b) *Musar Sawal* : This is a small poem. The name—"Moses's Questions" would give an idea of the subject. It is said that Hazrat Musa used to converse with God on mount "Tur". Whenever in difficulty, he used to seek guidance direct from God. One of these dialogues has been poetically rendered by the poet in terms of catechism. The book is chiefly devoted to the glorification of prayer. The poet says that Moses alone among the prophets had the privilege of talking directly to God, and only Hazrat Muhammad had the honour to be invited by God to meet him and talk to him; but this happened not on Mount "Tur" but in the Heavens, during the prophet's ascension or *Miraj*. The followers of Hazrat Muhammad—his "ummat"—can have an experience similar to *Miraj*, five times a day during prayers, and they can also hold conversation with God through recitation of the Holy Quran.

The poet calls this book a translation of some Persian work.

(c) *Shariat-nama*: From its subjectmatter and the poet's command language, it appears to be a work of his mature age. By this time the poet had acquired fame as a divine. He seems

to have inherited his father's gifts and became an expert himself, as may be seen from passages like the following :—

Bismilla-hir-Rahman-ir-Rahim
(In the name of the Lord, the Merciful, the Beneficent)
Listen to the sayings of Shariat-nama.
Anyone who is a true Muslim will surely obey these.
If a Muslim does not observe Islamic laws,
He no longer remains a Muslim. . .
Note the substance of "Amr and Nahi"
"Amr" in Arabic means the positive orders of God;
And "Nahi" means His negative orders or prohibitions.

It is evident from the above that the object of the book was to versify the tenets of Islam. The part dealing with *Amr* describes the positive injunctions and that dealing with *Nahi* discusses the prohibitions.

A few Writers of Pads (1560—1630?)

"Vrajabuli" occupies a significant place in Padavali literature. It is not the language of Vrajadham or Mathura-Vrindavan. The language of Mathura is "Vrijbhakha". "Vrajabuli" is not the spoken language of any particular place, it is only the language of poetry. It is a mixture of the Maithili of Vidyapati and the language of Bengali pada-writers and it is thus known as "Vrajabuli" in Bengal, Assam and Orissa. It was a product of the genius of Bengali pada writers and developed much the same way as Urdu developed in North India. Urdu is both a written and a spoken language; but Vrajabuli is a writ-

ten and poetic language only. As this artificial language (buli) was closely associated with the love-tales of Radha and Krishna, the word "Vraja", signifying "Vrajadham", where the romance took place, was prefixed to it; it came to be known as Vrajabuli. Hence the use of "Vrajabuli" in the padas is merely a literary convention, having no religious or communal significance. Muslim poets freely used it in their songs. One of the significant examples of such use is the "Baramashi" of *Sati Maina* by Daulat Kazi (composed 1622—1638). He uses the language for the poetry of love, but it has nothing to do with the romance of Radha and Krishna.

The tradition of writing padas in Vrajabuli took inception in the first half of the 16th century. During the period from the latter half of the 16th to the first half of the 17th centuries, the tradition became widespread. It was during this period that Govinda Das (1535?—1613), Jnanadas (1530—1615?), Balaram Das (1530—1610?), Ray Shekhar (contemporary of Govinda Das), Kavi Vallabh (1598) and other well-known Vaishnava pada-writers, wrote innumerable padas and filled the Bengali language with the sweetness of *Vrajabuli*. It became a recognised literary practice to compose padas and songs, especially love-songs in Vrajabuli.

Bengali Muslims did not lag behind the Hindus in adapting the *Vrajabuli*. The padas of five Muslim poets have been collected in the well-known Vaishnava collection *Gaurapada Tarangini* and *Padakalpataru* (collected in the first half of the 18th century). It is obvious from this that even upto the first half of the 18th century the padas composed by Muslim poets were freely used by the Vaishnavas. It is sheer ignorance of

the spirit of the age to regard the Muslim writers of the padas as virtual converts to Vaishnavism. On the contrary, there is ample evidence to show that the Muslim pada-writers were orthodox Muslims, who also composed poems that are deeply Islamic in spirit and contents.

The four writers included in the Vaishnava collections, belonged to the later 16th and early 17th centuries, when this literary style was very much in vogue. How else could they compose padas in such pure Vrajabuli as they use. We know very little about them; but we shall try to give some account of their works.

(a) Shah Akbar: There are good reasons to look upon Shah Akbar as the oldest of the pada-writers of this period. We have only one of his padas, which is included in *Gaurapada Tarangini* (P.15). It belongs to the *Gaudachandrike* branch of *Vaishnava* literature, and describes the life and miracles of *Shri Chaitanya*. Most of the best composers of the *Gaudachandrika* padas lived in the 16th century, and it is likely that Shah Akbar also flourished in that century. His single *pada* is one of the best of that period. Shah Akbar was a mystic divine having a large number of disciples. We know the name of one of them, Ain-ud-Din, who was the author of at least fifteen padas. These have recently been published in some literary journals.

(b) Nasir Mahmud: Only one of his padas has been printed in the *Padakalpataru* (No. 1329). This pada which is composed in an extremely sweet language, shows excellence of the verse.

(c) Kabir : There is no evidence to show whether this was

the well-known Sheikh Kabir or another poet. One of his padas is included in *Gaurapada Tarangini*. This describes the "holi" sports of Radhakrishna.

(d) Salbeg (Salih Beg): Three of his padas were collected in *Padakalpataru* (Nos. 1542, 2472, and 2972). The Aprakashita *Padaratnavali* also contains a pada by him (No. 443). The "Typical selections from *Oriya Literature*," published by Calcutta University, also contain a few of his compositions.

That his name has suffered mutation is evident. A pada by him came to light, recently. The Colophon reads, "Saleh Beg, the sinner speaks." This Saleh Beg may be none but him. This pada is also written in Vrajabuli.

It is said that Salbeg or Saleh Beg was an inhabitant of Orissa. I do not see any reason to doubt this. At that time Orissa was a part of Bengal. According to an Oriya book, entitled *Dardhyabhakti*, a Pathan married a Hindu widow who bore him a son. But we have nothing to support the story that he later on turned a Vaishanava and decided to spend the last years of his life in Vrajadham.

Muhammad Khan (1580—1650)

He occupies a high place in the hiararchy of the 17th century poets. An inhabitant of Hathazari area in Chittagong, he was the descendant of Rasti Khan, a king of Chittagong in the seventh generation. In village Gobra of Hathazari area (birth place of the poet Alaol) a stone inscription was discovered in Rasti Khan's mosque, which has now been fixed in the wall of Alaol's mosque. Muhammad Khan was most probably born in the same Gobra village. The poet Mukim (1773 A.D.) mentions him immediately after Sayyid Sultan in his list of the old poets of Chittagong. In determining the sequence Mukim seems to have been guided by the fact that Muhammad Khan was Sayyid Sultan's disciple. The poet has set forth his family history in the preface to his poem "Maktul Hossain". It is necessary to quote it here, because he has already given us his dates of composition in two other books. So far seven of his works have been discovered. Chronologically arranged these are as follows :—

(a) Satya-Kali-Vivad-Sangbad.
(b) Hanifar Ladai.
(c) Ashav-nama (It is a part of "Maktul Hossain" rather than a separate work).
(d) Maktul Hossain.
(e) Kiamat Nama (Again, the eleventh canto of "Maktul Hossain).
(f) Dajjal-Nama (apart of "Kiamatnama").
(g) Kasimer Ladai (Another part of "Maktul Hossain").

Neither in *Satvakali Sanghad* nor in *Hanifar Ladai* do we find any reference to his Peer; not even in any signature verse. Hence we conclude that they were written before the discipleship began. These two works also bear signs of immaturity. The other three books were written under the instruction of his Peer. It seems that Sayyid Sultan found him more competent than his other disciples to complete his own poetical compositions. Muhammad Khan has himself described the chronological order of these three poems :

Navi-Bangsha came from the pen of the great man himself,

wherein he described the efflorescence of the Creation.
He half-completed the book on the death of the Holy Prophet,
And at last ordered me to finish it.
In obedience to his Command
I have said these verses about the Four Doomsday,
After my poems on the two brothers,
I describe the vision of the Doomsday,
And finally the Beatific vision.
There was nothing more to say.
The two poems are parts
Of the same book.

Here the poet speaks of two poems. One of these is Sayyid Sultan's "*Ofate Rasul*", and the other, his "Maktul Hossain".

As we shall soon see, Muhammad Khan has narrated the story of "Ashab Kahhaf", the lives of the two brothers and the vision of the Doomsday, in the second, the third to the sixth and the eleventh chapters of the "Maktul Hossain" respectively. Thus they are only different parts of the same work, "Maktul Hossain". Of course the eleventh chapter which describes the Doomsday has been given a different title: "Kiyamat Nama". That is why the poet after naming the tenth chapter in his list of contents, goes on to say :

In the eleventh chapter to be taken up last,
I shall describe the turmoils of the Doomsday.
We may now discuss his works individually.

(a) *Satya Kali Vivad Sanghad*: As discussed above, it was undoubtedly his earliest work. The chronogram gives its date

of composition as 1635 A.D. It is a rather voluminous work. The poet states at the outset that his aim was to compose "Satya kali vivad Sanghad." The table of contents inserted after the introduction, is in brief as follows :

Chapter I :	The love-affair of Kali, Satya and Satyavati, with Dusshila; Kali comes to fight with Satya; Mitra Kantha, the ambassador of peace intervenes. The priest also came, but failed to reconcile them. Narad being at the root of all evils, war breaks out.
Chapter II:	Description of the war between Satya and Kali. Kali wins through her wiles. Satya faints in the battle-field and is removed to his house.
Chapter III:	Satya remains in a swoon, Satyavati's mourning; Sabuddhi calls Dhannantari, the saint. Satya comes to himself after taking the pill of knowledge. The tale of Yogi-Satyavati.
Chapter IV:	The victory of Satya, Kali; the Sinner, Swoons. Dusshila weeps over Kali who is seemingly dead. Yogi Dhannantari restores him to consciousness. The tale of Yogi—Dusshiala.

Chapter V : The battle is over, but other quarrels last throughout the 'Treta' era. At last in the 'Duzpar', the quarrels cease and Kali returns home much humiliated.

The origin of this story is disclosed on the third page of this Punti, where it is stated that Narada gave Dusshila, the daughter of king Jatidhasa in marriage to king Kali, who was in love with her. That is where the story begins.

Just as "Padmavati" of Malik Mohammad Jaisi, and its Bengali version by Alaol—"Padmavati", are allegories so the *Satya Kali Vivad Sangbad* too is an allegory. "The victory of Truth and the destruction of Untruth" is the main theme. Though the style is immature, it is nevertheless the only allegory surviving from Middle Bengali literature of the Muslims.

(b) *Hanifar Ladai*: This book is sometimes mistaken to be a part of *Maktul Hossain*, but it is an independent work. In a manuscript dating 1134 Tripuravda (1724 A.D.) the beginning is preserved intact. The poem starts with a long invocation in the course of which the poet sings the praise of the holy places, the sacred books etc., concluding it with a eulogy of Chittagong and peer Badar. The long invocation is a proof that it is a separate work, having little to do with Maktul Hossain. It is also remarkable that the poet nowhere names his own peer in it, though he invokes all conceivable objects and spirits.

There is nothing new about its subject-matter. It seems to be influenced by Sabirid Khan's *Hanifa and Kayra Paree*. South of Chittagong in the Shahapeer island near the Arakans, there is

a "Tangi" about Muhammad Hanifa and Kayra Paree. This punthi bears the influence of that myth. The book describes the marriage ceremony of Hanifa and Kayra Paree which is reputed to have taken in Rokam or Rakhing, or Rakhying.

(c) *Ashab Nama*: No manuscript of this work has as yet been discovered, but the poet alludes to the four Ashabs in his *Kiyamat Nama*. This is not a new work, but actually the second chapter of "Maktul Hossain".

(d) *Maktul Hossain*: This is our poet's magnum opus. Some time ago it was published by Battala at Calcutta, but that edition is now scarsely available. It narrates the tragic history of Karvala. In the month of Muharram the book used to be recited by groups of people in most Muslim homes of Chittagong. Even at present it is a favourite with some people. Though the subject is historical and the poem gives a faithful account of the incidents at the same time remaining on poetic heights.

The book has eleven cantos. According to the poet's versified list the cantos deal with the followilng subjects :—

Canto I	Fatima (Adi)
Canto II	Ashav
Canto III	Hasan
Canto IV	Muslim
Canto V	War
Canto VI	Hussain
Canto VII	Wives (Stree)
Canto VIII	The Messenger (Daoba)
Canto IX	Walid
Canto X	Yazid
Canto XI	Conclusion (Anto).

The chronogram state that the poem was written in 1056 Hijri or 1567 Shakavda or 1645 A.D. It seems that Muhammad Khan planned it as a rival composition to Kasiram Das's the *Mahabharata* (1645 A.D.). That work has eighteen cantos *viz*: Adi, Sabha, Bara, Virat, Uddyog, Bheeshma, Darona, Karna, Shailya, Sanptika, Stree, Shanti, Annshashan, Aswamedha Ashrama, Bas, Mushal, Mahaprasthan and Sargarahan. Of these it has "Adi" and "Stree" in common with Maktul Hossain. That Bengali books written by Hindus were popularly read by Muslims, is a fact which Sayyid Sultan notes in the preface to his Shab-i-Miraj:

> In compliance of the order of Laskar Paragal Khan,
> Kavindra wrote a poem narrating the tales of Mahabharta,
> Which were read in every Hindu and Muslim home.
> Nobody thinks of writing about God or the Prophet.
> Arabic and Persian books
> Are only understood by the learned, not by the common.
> This pitiable state of affairs has led me to write the present work and devote it to the Prophet.

Sayyid Sultan also instructed his disciple Muhammad Khan to carry on his work. The latter has expressed the same sentiments in the Maktul Hossain and taken up the task with the same avowed intention.

Probably poet Muhammad did not live long after composing the Muktul Hossain, in 1645, or he would probably have written much more. As yet, we have no evidence of any other work by him. If he lived for seventy years, he must have been born about the year 1580 A.D.

CHAPTER IV

Literary Activity in the Adjoining State Courts

Besides the literary development of the Mughal period discussed in the last chapter, literary activity also flourished in two independent kingdoms outside the Mughal Empire. These were Rosang and Tripura. Though both these countries maintained their independence till the end of the Mughal rule in Bengal, they were very much under the influence of Mughal culture. As at present, Bengali speaking Muslims formed the bulk of the population of these two territories. Due to this and in conformity to the cultural atmosphere of the day, Persian gained firm grounds here side by side with Bengali.

The contribution of the Muslims of these two countries to Bengali literature is so valuable that no account of Muslim Bengali literature of the Mughal period can be complete without a mention of this. The patronage received by Bengali language and literature in the courts of Rosang and Tripura surpassed that of the Mughals. Here we shall give a brief account of these two offshoots of Bengali literature.

Court of Rosang Kings

Rosang or *Rosanga* is the old name of modern Arakan. Arakanese call it *Rakhaing-Tangi* or the land of giants, which is only a variation of the Sanskrit phrase "*Raksha-Tunga*", meaning the high platform of the giants. *Raksha* is usually pronounced in Bengali as *Rakkha*, which is a typical Prakritic variation. Bengali *tang* is derived from the Sanskrit *Tunga*. It is possible,

though not proved, that Tang is a word of non-Aryan origin, but the phrase *Rakhaing Taingi* linguistically appears to be derived from the Sanskrit "Raksha Tunga", with the addition of the "ing" and "i" inflections. The popular modern variation of "Rakhaing" is "Arakan".

It is difficult to describe the precise boundaries of Arakan as existing in the times of the Mughals. Parts of this territory changed hands from time to time, but it comprised a large area including a considerable portion of Chittagong, specially the lands stretching south of the Karnaphuli. The "Maghi calendar" observed in the whole of Chittagong even today, proves the extent and depth to which the Arakanese traditions had penetrated these parts. The main fount from which the influence of Bengali literature spread over Arakan was the city of Chittagong. Even in our times the Arakanese Muslims are equally at home with Burmese and Bengali.

As the present author tried to show in a former work, entitled *Arakan Rajshabhay Bangla Sahitya* (Bengali literature in the Arakan Court), it was during the reign of the Rosang King, Mahatoing Tsandaya, (788—810 A.D.) or *Mahat Chandra*, that Arab traders began to settle down permanently in Chittagong. It was partly through their efforts that Islam spread in that country during the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. From the 15th century onwards, the *Rosang* kings came more and more under the influence of Islam. In 1430 A.D. *Rosang* was a tributary kingdom of *Gaud*. About that time many Muslims came down from Gauda to settle at *Mrohang* or *Murung*. There is no doubt that their vernacular was Bengali. It is also worth noting that for two centuries—from 1434 to 1645—independent Rosang kings added Muslim titles to their original Arakanese names, such as Kalima Shah, Sikandar Shah, Salim Shah, Husain Shah, etc. There was little fellow-feeling between the Arakanese and the Mughals or Pathans; nevertheless the former observed Muslim rites and ceremonies. They probably could not escape coming under Islamic influence, because of the superior culture of Bengali Muslims. All the high offices of the state, like Chief Minister, Court Lords, War Minister, Chief Justice, were usually filled by Muslims. Though the king was a Buddhist, strangely, it were not the Buddhist Bhikshus who performed the coronation rites, probably because coronation was looked upon as a temporal affair. The ceremonies were usually performed by Muslim Ministers. Alaol, in his *Sikandar Nama* describes how Prime Minister Majlis, who was popularly called "Nawaraj", performed the coronation ceremony of king Shrichandra Thudhamma (1652—1684).

Majlis clad in stately robes,
Bowed to the king and spoke to him thus:
Treat your subjects like your sons, O' King!
I pray thee, do not falsify their trust.
Be just and kind in all affairs of state. . .
Be gracious, good and godly.
Make good people happy, root out evil,
Never be fickle, never be vain;
Do not chastise a man for wrong done long ago.
The king gave word to these and all the rest
Of solemn kingly deeds and duties.
Then Majlis bowed to him first,
And last of all the king's relations from his mother's side.

Thus the Arakan court was steeped in Muslim traditions till the end of the 17th century. Islam did not have a religious hold on them, but it was decidedly a strong cultural force.

The Muslim cultural influence entering Arakan through Bengali Muslims had marked Bengali characteristics. The Bengali language and literature permeated Independent Arakan, though it was not politically a part of Bengal. The main reason for the phenomenal rise of Bengali influence was the superiority of the Bengali language over the Arakanese, which was less developed. The Bengali officials of the court also encouraged Bengali.

The foremost among the Muslim officials who patronized Bengali learning was Ashraf Khan the *Laskar Wazir* or War Minister of King Thudhamma's Court. It was at Ashraf Khan's behest that Daulat Qazi composed *Sati Maina*. Ashraf Khan was a resident of Chittagong. Some relics of his palace are found at Charia village of the present Hathazari Police Station. The Laskar Wazir's tank in village Kadalpur, P. S. Rauzan, too is one of the constructions that have survived from him.

Another poet of the court of Shri Thudhamma was Mardan the author of *Nasira-nama*. Shri Thudhamma was succeeded by Nripatigiri or Narabadigyi (1638—1645) as the king of Arakan. Then for seven years Arakan was the scene of a civil war, as a result of which Arakan lost the area extending from Dacca to Chittagong. These were troubled times and no literary writings of this reign have so far come to light. The reign of the next king Thado Mintar (1645—1652), was more fruitful, when the poet Alaol composed his *Padmavati*, being then under the patronage of the Prime Minister, Magan Thakur.

Thakur was among the most-honoured titles of the Arakan court. Magan was a Muslim of Quraishi descent. He was himself a poet; a poem by him entitled *Chandravati* has recently been found.

After the death of *Thado Mintar*, his son *Sanda Thudhamma* (1652—1684) became the king of Rosang. Magan kept the office of the Prime Minister and poet Alaol continued to receive his favours. After Magan's death, another Muslim, Sulaiman, became the Prime Minister of Sanda Thudhamma. Sayyid Muhammad was then the War Minister of the king. Alaol was inspired to writing his *Sapta Paykar* by this official. There was another court lord named Navaraj Majlis in Thudhamma's court and it was at his express desire that Alaol translated *Sikandar-nama* into Bengali verse. Another Minister of Sanda Thudhamma was Sayyid Musa. Alaol's *Saiful Mulk* was written at his persuation.

The literary tradition founded by Alaol in Arakan was alive for a long time after him. Though most of the poets who followed him are now lost in obscurity, one of the spiritual inheritors of Alaol is still alive through his works. He was Abdul Karim Khondakar, who composed a long poem, "Dulla Majlis", in 1705, at the request of a courtier of the king of Arakan. He wrote it in three and a half years, while he lived at *Mrohaung*, the capital of Arakan.

Outlined above was a picture of the cultural world of Arakan. We now turn to its literary achievements.

1. **Daulat Qazi** (1600—1638), is the oldest and best known poet of the Arakanse court. He belonged to the Qazi family

of Sultanpur village of Rauzan P.S. It is said that he was already an accomplished scholar at a very young age, but was denied recognition because he was so young. So he left his native land in disgust and came to the court of Arakan whose benevolence he had heard so much. Here his merit was quickly recognized and the poet began his ventures in poetic creation under the patronage of Ashraf Khan, the War Minister of King Shri Thudamma (1622—1638). His best known poem is "Sati Maina—Lor Chandrani".

The poem consists of three parts. The first part is called "Parichay" or the "Introduction", in which the poet has introduced the hero and the heroine, presenting a detailed picture of their married life which was, however, a failure.

The second part is entitled "Separation". Here *Mainabati* undergoes a process of purification of the soul, suffering the pangs of separation. She also has to face temptations aroused by *Chhatan*, which have been beautifully described by the poet.

The last part describes the "Reconciliation", when Maina and her husband Lor and co-wife Chandrani, are finally reconciled among themselves.

Daulat Qazi is not only the best Muslim poet of ancient Bengal, he is one of the very best poets of the language. He had a superb command of the Bengali and Vrajabuli languages. He was the poet who proved that even without the love-lore of Radha and Krishna, Vrajabuli could be effectively employed in Bengali.

2. Mardan (1600—1645). Among Daulat Qazi's contemporary poets, only the works of Mardan have survived the

ravages of time. As a stylist poet he was not as powerful as Daulat Qazi, but received much patronage from the Arakanese king Shri Thudhamma, for whom he wrote his poem *Nasira-nam*. In this he has liberally showered praises on King Shri Thudhamma. The poet was probably a resident of the city of Kanchi in Rosang.

Nasira-nama is a narrative poem. It is an entirely original composition. The main theme of the poem is Fate—the all powerful force. Abdul Karim and Abdul Navi were two merchant-friends. Abdul Karim's daughter Nasira was betrothed to Abdul Navi's son, Abdus Sabir. As ill luck would have it, Abdul Karim became poor and his friend backed out of the marriage proposal. Abdul Karim sorely felt this insult. However, his wife tried to console him by telling him a tale, the moral of which was supremacy of Fate. Finally, luck favoured Abdul Karim and he became rich again; Nasira was married to Sabir.

3. Qureshi Magan Thakur (1600—1660). As the present author has shown in his previous work *Arakan Rajshabhay Bangal Sahitya*, "Magan Thakur" who patronised Alaol, was none other than Qureshi Magan, the author of *Chandravati*. He was an inhabitant of Arakan and of *Siddiqui-cum-Qureshi* descent. His real name is not known. *Magan* being only a kind of nickname, meaning a "gift" from God.

We have it on the authority of Alaol himself that Magan Thakur was a man of rare ability, well versed in Arabic, Persian Burmese and Sanskrit; and *Chandravati* is a living proof of his mastery over the Bengali language. He was also familiar with the

arts of music and drama. He died in 1660 at a ripe age in Arakan and was buried there. This was later than Sultan Shah Shuja's death.

Chandravati is a narrative poem, and reads very much like a fairy tale. *Birbhan*, the son of king *Chandrasen* of *Bhadravati*, the hero and *Chandravati*, the daughter of Surapal king of *Sarandwip* or Ceylon heard each other's fame and longed for each other unseen. The hero took a fleet of thousand ships (named 'Jalia', 'Gorab' etc.), to Ceylon, to seek Chandravati's hand in marriage. Sut, the son of the Prime Minister of Birbhan, and his closest friend accompanied him in the expedition. The fleet weathered many a storm till at last it reached Sarandwip, where Chandravati was all but married to another suitor. *Birbhan* is impatient; Sut cheers him up and assures his royal friend that he could trust his skill. He was as good as his word and at the end of an interesting course of events, Chandravati was married to Birbhan.

4. **The Great Cham Alaol** (1607—1680). Alaol being one of the many court poets of Rosang, is nevertheless one of the greatest Muslim poets of Bengal. He also lived the longest and was the most profilic of all Bengali poets, old or modern. Few compare with him whether in richness of content or style; though Daulat Qazi perhaps excelled him in sheer imaginative intensity.

Already a great deal has been written on Alaol by this and other authors, so we shall only briefly touch upon his career.

He was born in 1607 at Jobra village in Hathazari P.S., Chittagong. In the grand muster roll of the poets of Chitta-

gong, compiled by the poet Mukim, it is stated that Alaol's forefathers belonged to Gaud, but he himself spent his life mostly in Arakan. His last few years were spent in his own village home. The "Alaol Tank" and "Alaol Mosque" commemorate his name there.

He lived a rich and colourful life. He was the son of the courtier of Majlis Khan, the ruler of Fathabad. This place should not be confused with "Sarkar Fathabad" of Faridpur. Taking the word 'Ganga' as synonym for river, (which has adequate warrant) and not as the name of the river Ganges, we are saved from a lot of confusion about place names. His description of Fathabad inevitably reminds one of Daulat Qazi's descriptions of the place :

"The city of Fathabad a charming place is far-famed in Chittagong". Fathabad is situated just at the point where the Halda river of Chittagong joins the Karnaphuli.

His father was killed fighting European pirates on a boat journey and Alaol himself reached Arakan in a wounded condition. He got himself enlisted in the Royal Body Guards of king Thado Mintor (1645—1652). His learning and poetic talent soon came to the knowledge of the Prime Minister *Magan Thakur* who extended his patronage to him. Alaol now forsook the sword for the pen. When Shah Shuja was killed in Arakan in 1660, the poet's fortune suffered a reverse, and a notorious Mirza had him put in jail for a few days, on a false charge, but he was soon set free. Then *Magan Thakur* who was god-father to him also died, and he was in difficulties for a few years. Later, he lived under the successive patronage of a court noble, Sayyid Musa, the War Minister

Sayyid Muhammad Khan, the Minister Navaraj Majlis and another nobleman, Shrimanta Sulaiman. But he was never really happy after Magan's death. He regarded court favours as "beggar's gifts" and at several places woes his lot for depending on them.

"I have composed a great many poems", says Alaol in *Saiful Muluk*. But unfortunately only five of these have survived him to this day. The rest seem to have been lost beyond recovery. The five works are as follows :—

(a) *Padmavati* : This is a composition of Muhammad Jaisi's famous Hindi work, and may be called a free translation of it, which Alaol did in 1651 A.D. or 1013 Maghi era during the last few years of Rosang king Sad Umangdar (1645—1652).

(b) *Sati Maina*: *Padmavati* was immediately followed by last portion of "Sati Moina—Lor Chandrani". The courtier Shrimanta Sulaiman persuaded the poet to complete the unfinished work of Daulat Qazi, mixing milk with honey. This was done in 1658.

(c) *Hapta-Paikar* : Before taking up this work, Alaol had already composed the first part of *Saiful Mulk*, at the command of Magan Thakur in 1659. But Magan Thakur died in the meantime, and by order of the Military Chief, Sayyid Muhammad, Alaol turned to writing *Hapta Paikar* in 1660. This too is an adaptation from a Persian book of that title.

(d) *Tohfa* : After *Hapta-Paikar*, in 1664, Alaol translated "Tohfa" or "the Present" of the Persian poet Yusuf Gada (composed in 795 A.H. or 1392 A.D.). It is not a story but rather a work of religious character. It took him two years to finish this work. It is a compilation like the Muslim Fiqh or the Sanhita of the Hindus. The Muslim rites and rituals mentioned in it are still widely observed, and the book itself deserves to be widely read.

(e) *Saiful-Mulk* : Begun by command of Magan Thakur, this work was finished by Alaol nine years after his death in 1669, at the instance of the chief courtier of the Arakan king, Sayyid Musa. This is again a translation from Persian.

(f) *Sikandar-Nama* : Written in 1673, this is his last work, when he had grown old and his days were "embittered by beggary" as the poet puts it. He was then attached to the court of Majlis Navaraj.

Besides these, Alaol wrote a number of songs and Padavalis, a few of which were recently recovered.

5. **Abdul Karim Khondakar.** The grand olympian tradition built up by Daulat Qazi, Mardan, Magan Thakur, Alaol and others, did not end with Alaol's death. We have proof of this in the distinguhed works of Abdul Karim Khondakar, whose *Dulla Majlis* composedin 1698 A.D., was recently re-discovered.

Earlier, the poet had written two other works, *Hazar Masael* and *Tamim Ansari*, which he has himself named in this poem.

Abdul Karim was a resident of Arakan. From the account of his family given in *Dulla Majlis* we learn that his great grandfather Ramju Mian got "Bishay Padabi" from the king and worked as the collector of sea-customs. His son, Mohsin Ali, was an interpreter in the same Department. Mohsin Ali's son Ali Akbar was the poet's father. Abdul Karim lived in *Mrohaung*, the capital of Arakan, where he composed *Dulla Majlis*, at the suggestion of king Atibar's Master of the Treasury.

Mrohaung was the capital of Arakan right from 1430 to 1785.

Dulla Majlis, a free rendering from Persian, narrates the traditional histories of the Prophets of God from Hazrat Adam, Ibrahim, Lut, Shuaib, Musa, Sulaiman and Isa to Muhammad Mustafa (peace be on them), as well as the lives of Hazrat Fatima and Ali. Yusuf Sufi, Khalid, Bilal, Hasan Basri, Hasan Quraishi and also of the king of Nishapur, Sultan Abu Sayeed.

His *Hazar Masael* (Thousand Canons of Religion) also a big work, sums up the code of Islamic Law. A Persian work of this title also exists, of which this was probably a translation. The poet says he has compiled it with the help of "another work".

Another religious work by him *Nur-nama*, treats of the creation of Adam and Hazrat Muhammad from "Nur", or the Divine Light.

B.—Bengali Literature in Tippera

Like Arakan, it is hardly possible to define the boundaries of Tripura as they existed in those times. The present Tippera and Noakhali districts were entirely incorporated in that kingdom. These districts still have a predominantly Muslim population. However, unlike Arakan, Muslim culture was predominant here from the outset, but slowly and gradually gained ground.

This land was mainly populated by primitive races and mostly ruled by the Chakma tribe. Culturally they were influenced by the Hindus of Bengal, till Muslim influence gradually penetrated here with the Muslim conquest. Though Tripura was never completely conquered by Muslims, the court

dress and the system of administration had marked Muslim features. That Bengali occupied a privileged position in this country, is borne out by ancient Bengali inscriptions on old coins and court decrees. Here we give a brief account of Muslim achievements in this country, in the sphere of literature:

1. **Shaikh Chand** (1560—1625). Among the Muslim writers of Tripura whose works have reached down to us, the foremost name is that of Shaikh Chand. He was a mystic and a powerful poet of his time.

The present author was the first to write on this poet, about 20 years ago. Since then some valuable contribution has been made to his study by Moulvi Ali Ahmad.

In his presidential address given to the 3rd annual conference of Sylhet Literary Society, Syed Murtaza Ali tried to substantiate that poet Shaikh Chand belonged to the village Bhager Hat in Bhanugach Sub-division of South Sylhet?. There is apparently nothing to contradict this conjecture; but there is no doubt that his life, specially literary career, was mainly spent in Tripura, where most of his manuscripts were discovered; and he also died there. As revealed by Professor Ali Ahmad, in his commentary of the catalogue of manuscripts, the poet lies buried at Baksar in Tippera.

The name of the poet's father was Fath Muhammad and of his peer, Shah Daula, who according to the poet, belonged to village Hurua, in Kadva Pargana. "His means are poor, but he has a large number of desciples", writes the poet.

The Kadba Pargana and Hurua village are 4 to 5 miles west of Lalmai Railway Station in Tippera. Shah Daula's grave is in Hurua village. Shaikh Chand's grave is in Baksar which is 4 to

5 miles to the south of Hurua. Though Shah Daula's home was Hurua, he "mostly spent his days in Paitkara Pargana teaching his disciples", so writes the poet. The Paitkara pargana is also in Tippera.

The poet had renounced the world and solely occupied himself with religious mediation or with poetry composition, his magnum opus being the *Rasul-Vijay*, or the Victorious March of the Prophet, which he finished in 12 years.

The precise chronology of this poet is difficult to know. In the four manuscripts of *Kiyamat-nama* found by Mr. Ali Ahmad, only at two places is there a mention of dates.

Though their views differ on this point, we are inclined to believe that *Kiyamat-nama* was composed in 1022 of the local Tippera era or 1612 A.D. Hence the poet belonged to late sixteenth and early 17th centuries.

Five works by him have been discovered so far. These were as follows :—

(a) *Rasul-Vijay*: This is Shaikh Chand's *magnum opus*. This was written under the instructions of Shah Daula. As the poet says, he composed these panchalis out of a material composition in Persian Kasasul Ambia (Stories of Prophets). A large section of the latter half of the book (after 116th chapter), entitled *Shab-i-Miraj*, describes the Holy Prophet's journey to Heaven and Hell. It also includes a chapter on "The lament of Iblis"; "Assassination of Taleb"; "Chastisement of Nubariz's Wife"; "Acceptance of Islam by a milkman", and similar topics.

(b) *Shah Daula*: Though not intended as a biography, it

gives some account of the life of his peer Shah Daula. The book is mystical in the main, written in terms of catechism. The poet asks questions of his *peer* and is enlightened by him on many mystic matters. There is an old edition of it printed at Bat-Tala.

(c) *Kiyamat-nama*: The title describes the theme—Day of Judgment. The year of composition as is mentioned in the poem, was 1022 Toppera year.

(d) *Hara-Gauri Sanghad*: This is a 13-sheet pamphlet on Yogic exercises as practised by the sufis of that age.

(e) *Talib-nama*: This is a 'champu' poem, partly verse and partly prose. The theme is similar to that of *Shah Daula*. It has special value in Bengali literature, because it contains the earliest specimens of mystic prose writing in Bengali.

2. Sayyid Muhammad Akbar (1657—1720). We believe that Sayyid Akbar too was a poet of Tripura, since all his manuscripts were found from there, with the exception of "Jebul Mulk Shamarukh" which has not yet come to light. However, some 40 years ago, an edition of it was brought out from Bat-Tala of Calcutta and was very popular, but the source of it is unknown. The poet was well-versed in Persian.

Giving a pen-portrait of the heroine of his love-tale, the poet at one place disgresses to tell us that he composed the poem at *Kalaavdha* i.e., age (16 years), and that he would have done much better in Persian. The date of composition, according to the Persian chronogram was 1084 A.H. or 1673 A.D. If he wrote the book at the age of sixteen he was born in 1657,—one hundred years before the battle of Plassey.

3. **Shukur Muhammad** (1680—1750). There is enough evidence to show that this poet too belonged to Tripura, and that he was not a poet of the post-Plassey period. His poem *Mainamatir Gan* was recently edited and published. Written in the early 18th century, it narrates the famous historical romance of Gopichandra, king of Tripura and his wife Mainamati.

4. **Muhammad Rafiuddin.** He was the author of the poem *Jebul Mulk Shamarukh*. All that we learn about his family from his poem is that his father's name was Ashraf, who was born in village Naranaya in Comilla. The poem is only another version of Mohammad Khan's story of Zebul Mulk, but Rafiuddin's style is more refined and erudite. We are inclined to believe that he belongs to the late 17th and early 18th century.

5. **Shaikh Sadi** (1712). The name of his poem is *Gadamallika*. Mallika, the princess of Rum who was an accomplished lady, announced that she would only marry the one who answers her thousand questions. All princes failed. Then an humble saint (*Gada*) named Abdullah made a bid and won. The poem was written in 1122, (surely of the Tripura era), or 1712 A.D.

6. **Sherbaz.** The manuscripts of both the poems of this poet were discovered from Tippera, viz., *Qasim's fight* and *Fatima's Suratnama*. He seems to be an earlier poet than the foregoing, and also superior to him in poetic merit.

Gada Mallika: This seems to prove that Sherbaz wrote his book after reading Shaikh Gada's work. Shaikh Sadi is inferior to Sherbaz as a poet. Even the names which Sherbaz has given to Mallika's friends show Sherbaz's superiority. The comment that the poet passes on Abdullah's success is worth noticing:

He who used to sleep on the ground
Is going to sleep in a bed

The *Qasim's Fight* narrates the tragic events of Karbala. But "Fatima's Suratnama" is indeed a strange book, coming from the pen of a Muslim writer. In this Hazrat Fatima appears rather like a Hindu goddess.

7. **Muhammad Abdur Razzak** (1770 A.D.) This poet belonged to Bedarabad pargana of Noakhali, and flourished in the reign of Maharaj Shri Valaram Manikya of Tripura, rival of Maharaj Krishna Manikya (1760—1783). His narrative poem *Saiful Mulk—Lal Banu*, was written around the year 1770 A.D.

CHAPTER V

Bengali Literature of the Mughal Period

A summing-up

A study of the Bengali literature of the Mughal period, is bound to impress one by its rich variety and intellectual depth. It definitely marked an advance over the literature of the Middle Ages. This was rather the result of an internal evolution than external patronage; but the process must have been helped by a closer contact with the far more advanced Persian literature, and Persian influence naturally was more marked in Muslim writings. Subsequently, when western influences were imported into Bengali through the medium of English, it were mainly the Hindus who gained by them. In the following paragraphs the scope and variety of the literature of this period have been briefly surveyed.

(a) Muslim Code of Law

Literature on the Islamic Code of Law forms a large part of the writings of the Mughal period. This mostly comprised "Risalas" or pamphlets, but a few voluminous works have also come down to us. Sayyid Sultan, writing in Shab-i-Miraj, denounces the learned divines who desist from teaching the lay, and invokes the curse of heavens on them. This gives an indication of the spirit of those times.

Most of the religious works compiled in this period appear to be adapted from Arabic or Persian. The *Kifayat-ul-*

Mussallin by Shaikh Muttalib, *Shihabuddin-Nama* by Abdul Hakim, *Hitajnan Vani* by Hayat Mahmud, and *Shariat-Nama* by Nasrullah Khan, are epitomes of considerable size but no less popular for being so. The same is true of the following writers, some of whom were already referred to in the previous chapter :—

Nasihat Nama	by	Shaikh Paran
Musar-Sawal	,,	Nasrullah Khan
Shariat Nama	,,	,,
Kifayat-ul-Mussalleen	,,	Shaikh Muttalib
Hidayat-ul-Islam	,,	Nasrullah Khan
Nasihat-Nama	,,	Abdul Hakim
Bayanat	,,	Nawazish Khan
Sarsaler Niti	,,	Kamar Ali
Munajat	,,	Muhammad Fasih
Namaz-Mahatmya	,,	Muhammad Khan
Shihabuddin Nama	,,	Abdul Hakim
Hitajnan Vani	,,	Hayat Mahmud.

(b) Muslim Tales

The second category comprised popular stories of a mythical or semi-historical nature.

Following a tradition of their own, these were the Muslim answer to the Hindu myths. Inspired as they were by Hindu mythology, it must be said in fairness to these tales that they helped a great deal in the dissemination of Muslim culture in Bengal, carrying it almost to every home. These mythical works were extremely popular in spite of their great bulk.

Some of these are as follows :—The *Nabi Bangsha*, *Rasul Vijay*, *Shab-i-Miraj*, *Ofat-i-Rasul* and *Iblis-Nama* by Sayyid Sultan; *Hanifar Ledai* by Muhammad Khan; *Amir Hamza* by Abdul Nabi; *Jangnama* (Rasul Vijay) by Hayat Mahmud; *Ambia Vani* by Muhammad Khan.

(c) The Muslim Theory of Creation

Some of the stories written in Islamic tradition, relate to the Muslim theory of Creation. These are mostly mythical in nature, but rather unlike similar stories written in other countries. Notable books of this class include the *Nurnamas* by Shaikh Paran, Mir Muhammad Shafi and Abdul Hakim, respectively; and the *Nurkandil* by Mir Muhammad Shafi.

(d) Muslim Philosophy and Mysticism

The Muslim philosophy of those days was mainly based on sufistic ideas. Its origin could be traced to Iran, Bukhara and Samarkhand. There is a predominance of Sufi literature in Persian. Bengali Muslims got these philosophical ideas through the same language. The *yogi* system also got mixed up with it. The literature resulting from the blend may be termed as *Yoga-Qalandar*. The following are the most important works in this line: The *Jnan-Chautisha* and *Jnan-Pradip* by Sayyid Sultan; The *Nur Jamal* by Haji Muhammad; *Sirr Nama* by Shaikh Mansur; *Yoga Qalandar* by Sayyid Murtaza and *Chari Mokam Bhed* by Abdul Hakim.

As in Persian, so in Bengali literature, there are two

branches of mystic processes viz., *Amaliyat* and *Gazliat*. The books mentioned above are those dealing with mystic processes—the Sufi *Amaliyat*. The "*Padavalis*" may be compared to the *Gazliat*. It is significant that the authors who wrote about the *Yoga-Qalandar*, also composed the Padavalis.

(e) Muslim Romances

This class of writings provided the largest scope for the free-play of Muslim talent, and it includes some of the finest Muslim contributions to Bengali literature. These romantic tales appear to be directly influenced by the finesse and artistry of Persian love-tales, and therefore, have a beauty and delicacy which is not to be seen in other poetical works. No poems written by the Hindus come near them in stylistic beauty. The more prominent of these works are, the *Yusuf-Zulaikha* by Abdul Hakim; *Yusuf-Zulaikha* by Garibullah and Yakub; *Lalmati Saiful Mulk* by Abdul Hakim; *Gul-i-Bakawali* by Nawazish Khan; *Zebul Mulk-Shamarukh* by Sayyid Muhammad Akbar; *Shah Jalal Madhumala* by Mangal Chand and *Gada-Mallika* by Shaikh Sadi.

(f) The Marsias

The settlement of Shias in Bengal during the Mughal period and the spread of Shiaism gave rise to the writing of elegiac poetry known as the *Marsias*. These were almost entirely unknown in Bengali literature before this period. Shaikh Faizullah's "Jainaber Chautisha" is the earliest example of

this kind of literature, but the story element is lacking in it. It is merely an elegy. Moreover, it is uncertain if "*Jainaber Chautisha*" was written by Shaikh Faizullah, the writer of *Gorakkha Vijay*, *Gazi Vijay* and *Satya Peer*. The regular *Marsias* were: The *Maqtul Husain* by Muhammad Khan; *Karvala* by Abdul Hakim; *Maqtul Husain* or (Janganama) by Garibullah and Yakub, and *Muharram Parva* by Hayat Mahmud.

(g) Historical Poems

The Muslims, well-known as historians, were also the first to write a book of history in Bengali. Some of the histories compiled in this period are notable both as histories and literature. The most important historical works include the *Pathan Prashangsha* and *Jorwar Sinher Kirti* by Nawazish Khan and the *Shahnama* (of Islamabad) by Wazir Ali.

(h) Allegories

Among all the Hindus and Muslim writers, it was only Muhammad Khan who composed an allegorical poem. The title of the poem is *Satya Kali Vivad Sangbad*, where *Satya* and *Kali* are both allegorical symbols; so that the work would appear to be of Hindu origin. However, these are mere symbols employed by the poet to describe the victory of the Truth or religion over the Evil. It is interesting to recall here the well-known Quranic verse reading, "The Truth has come and the Untruth has vanished; indeed the Untruth was destined to vanish". Like the *Padumavat* of Malik Muhammad Jaysi,

this is an allegorical poem and the symbolical names employed in it, whether Hindu or Muslim, are really not important.

(i) Padavalis

We have already stated that "Ilm-i-Tasawwuf", or mystic philosophy, has two types of manifestations in literature: "Amal" and "Gazal". Among the Persian and Indian mystics, some have discoursed on mystic ideas, others have composed songs. The same is true of the Sufi literature of Bengal. The '*Padavalis*' may be likened to the *Gazals*. Thus Sayyid Sultan's *Jnan Pradip*, Sayyid Murtaza's *Yoga Qalandar* are mainly discoursive, though these poets also wrote Gazals. Shah Akbar, Nasir Mahmud, Salbeg (Salih Beg), '*Kabir*' and Kamar Ali, composed *Padavalis*.

(j) Miscellaneous

The mystic or Marefati songs written in Bengal have been collected in several volumes, like the *Ragmala*, and the *Dhyanmala*. In addition to the above classification, we also find a few books on Astrology, e.g. Muhammad Shafi's *Sayat Nama* and one or two other works written on the idea of a common Hindu-Muslim culture, e.g. Garibullah's *Satya Peer*.

FIFTH PART

The British Period

(1757—1947)

CHAPTER I

Political and Cultural Background

An event of great significance in history, the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula by the British in 1757, at Plassey, dealt a severe blow to Muslim power in Bengal. Not only did it bring in its wake great sufferings for the Muslim people, but through a gradual process, like slow poisoning, led to their political and social destruction. Here we shall briefly recount the facts of this tragic history.

After Siraj-ud-daulah's defeat, though Meer Jafar nominally succeeded him as the Nawab of Bengal, the real power rested with Clive. Upon Meer Qasim's successive defeats at Giria, Udaynala and Baksar (1764 A.D.), even the last vestiges of Muslim power in Bengal vanished. Clive obtained the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orrisa from the Emperor Shah Alam of Delhi on the promise of paying him a revenue of 26 lakhs of rupees a year. Being already a force to reckon with, the East India Company now acquired *de jure* rights to rule the country. Diarchy was initiated. Muhammad Riza Khan and Shitab Ray were appointed "Naib-Diwans" in Bengal and Bihar respectively, who reduced the country to a state of abject poverty and a famine broke out. This is known in Bengali as "Chiattarer Mannantar" or the tragedy of the year "76" (1176 of Bengali Era, corresponding to 1769 A.D.). Hunger and pestilence reduced the population almost by one-third. The tragedy is remembered by the Bengalis to this day and "76"

has become an ominous number. It is sometimes inscribed on envelopes as a mark of caution, the idea being that if someone other than the actual addressee opens the letter, he will incur the curse of the millions who died in the famine of "76".

From 1772 to 1793, during the successive tenures of Lord Hastings and Lord Cornwallis as Governors-General, the English introduced several measures in Bengal. Early in this period, the capital was shifted from Murshidabad to Calcutta, the Nawab became a pensioner, and in 1793, the Permanent Settlement was introduced, much to the distress of Muslim Bengal.

In 1836 Persian lost its status as the court language which again was a blow to Muslims, who could not easily reconcile themselves to the change.

The British had introduced English education in Bengal nearly forty years earlier, Charles Grant being the pioneer in this respect; but the real success was due to the missionaries. Among the pioneers of English education in this country William Carey is the most renowned. He came to Calcutta in 1793 A.D. and joined the Mission at Shree Rampur. An English School was established there by his effort and it was also due to him that the first Bengali translation of the Bible was published from Shree Rampur. His efforts were followed up by David Hare and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The Fort William College was founded in 1800, and in 1823 the "Committee of Public Instruction" was formed. Through the efforts of this Committee an Anglo-Sanskrit College was established. Thus English education was gradually spreading all over the country, and Persian receded in the background.

While the Hindus took full advantage of the new English education, the Muslims proudly stood aloof from it, because of their antipathy towards the alien medium.

The Muslims who had lost their Kingdom, prestige, power and even their language, now faced a threat to their religion at the hands of Christian missionaries. But they did not easily give up their cause. The consolidation and expansion of the British political power with the consequent changes in the administrative and social set up, could not leave them unstirred. A new politico-religious uprising, known as the Wahhabi Movement was started and quickly gained ground. Meer Nisar Ali, alias Titu Meer, an inhabitant of Barasat Subdivision of the 24-Parganas, played a leading role in this movement. He fought the English at the bamboo fort of Banshberia, dying a martyr. He was followed by his *peer* Dadu Mia, of Faridpur, who was killed in 1847 after suffering indignities at the hands of the English in 1847. However, Bengali Muslims were not cowed down by British terrorism; the fire of discontent raged in them unabated till the final flare-up of 1857. But it was natural that they should incur the displeasure and distrust of the British.

For an account of the hardships suffered by Bengali Muslims under the British rule, one might refer to Hunter's book, 'Indian Mussalmans,' published in 1871. Candidly criticising the British policy in India, this British author deplores the fact that for 125 years since the battle of Plassey, the Indian Muslims received a most unjust treatment at their hands. The former rulers of the land were left without food and clothing. The Muslim community of India stood ruined and lost, owing as

Hunter says, to the unimaginative British rule.

As pointed out by Hunter, the Muslim aristocracy of Bengal depended on three main occupations for their living, viz., higher ranks in the army; high offices in the revenue and judicial departments, and diplomatic or political careers. Not only were Muslims debarred from entering the Army, but the doors of the *Diwani* were also closed upon them, the English occupying all the executive and the Hindus all clerical offices. The Muslims no longer occupied any political or legal offices either, though formerly these were their exclusive privileges.

The Muslims refused to learn English, Hunter goes on to say; they conducted the affairs of the country in Persian efficiently enough, and had capable and talented administrators among them. The change-over from Persian to English hardly meant the same thing for the Hindus, who readily took to learning English, just as they were learning Persian under the Muslim rule.

All this and much else has been written by Hunter, who squarely puts the blame for the abject condition to which the Muslim community was reduced, upon the short sighted and unimaginative policy of the British rulers.

Even after 1871, the oppression of the Muslims continued. The Mutiny of 1857, confirmed English doubts about Muslim fidelity and they hardly left anything undone to crush the Muslims both politically and socially. It was not till the end of the 19th Century, that the Muslims showed any sign of political life at all. However, their spirits lay dormant and time has proved it that they could not be wiped out. Finding themselves by-passed by the Hindus in every walk of life, due to

British discrimination and all out patronage of the Hindus, they at last demanded the division of Bengal which came about in 1904. Since the struggle of 1857, this was the first sign of Muslim revival in India. However, due to stubborn Hindu resistence, the partition was undone shortly afterwards, in utter disregard of the wishes and interests of the Muslim population.

Since then the clash of interests between the Hindus and Muslims became more and more open and pronounced, ultimately leading to the partition of the country and establishment of Pakistan in 1947.

Until the 19th Century, the English had not been able to bring about any change in the cultural life of East Bengal. On the contrary many of them learnt Persian and Arabic, and adopted Indian manners and style of living. They enjoyed being carried about in palanquins, smoked the *hookah* and even chewed *pan* leaves. In short, they were perfect models of the Muslim "diwans." They were also amused by the *Baiji's* (dancing girl's) songs and relished Mughal dishes.

In spite of an outward preference for Muslim style of living, the British really favoured the Hindus and tried to play them up against the Muslims. The British Government generously patronized Hindu festivals. At some of these festivals, marchpasts were held and guns were fired. Such official participation in Hindu festivals, was, however, given up in 1832. Some Englishmen not only attended the *Yatra* recitals, but also composed Yatra-songs. One such composer was Anthony, who is famous for his *Yatra* compositions.

The spread of English education had inevitable repercus-

sions on the cultural life of the country. The establishment of the Fort William College of Calcutta in 1800, was a memorable event in our cultural history. From now on, the spread of English education knew no stop and it soon swept the country. The Hindus took to it with a zest, but the Muslims for a long time looked askance at it, and rather indulged in political movements, like the Wahhabi agitation and the struggle of 1857 in the vain hope of getting back their lost power. The result was a steady Hindu revival and the Muslims gradually going under.

The history of Bengali literature during the British period bears the mark of the mental resistence that the Muslims bore to the new change. The year 1800 is a landmark in the history of Bengali literature, when the Fort William College of Calcutta was established. From this college several works in Bengali prose were published in 1825, and that was really the beginning of Bengali prose literature. Till then poetry was the only recognized form of literary expression. The Muslims, however, still carried on the poetic tradition while the Hindus more favourably reacted to the new medium and produced a new prose literature which was full of Western ideas. Khan Bahadur Hamidullah of Chittagong was the last Muslim writer in the Mughal Tradition. His Persian history *Tawarikh-i-Hamidia* is a well-known work, as also his Bengali works of poetry *Shahadat-Udyan* (1863) and *Tranpath*.

Throughout the period from 1800 to 1857, while Muslims stuck to the traditional form, Raja Rammohan Roy (d.1833), Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Datta among the Hindus had already imported Western ideas into Bengali prose.

The creative genius of Bankim Chandra (1838—1894) finally secured for Bengali prose and the new Western ideas a permanent place in Bengali literature. It was about this time also that the Muslims changed their attitude towards prose. Mir Musharraf Husain (1848—1911) is the first well-known Muslim writer of prose in Bengali.

From the facts briefly narrated above, it will be evident that for one hundred years, from 1757 to 1857, Bengali Muslims only hugged the old Mughal tradition in literature. We may describe the literary production of this period as imitations of the classics. These were quite untouched by western influences. From 1857 onwards, however, the Muslims took an increasing interest in the prose forms. *Ratnavali* (1869) of Mir Musharraf Husain, was the first modern novel by a Muslim. Muslim writings since the publication of *Ratnavali* may be called "The New Literary Process", which we have discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

The Old Tradition during the British Period

We have seen that Muslim Bengali writings of the first one hundred years of British rule merely imitated the old writers, having practically no originality. The influence of Persian literature was indeed very deep and widespread, even among the Hindus of the later Mughal period. But the language was still quite different from what is termed as "Muslim Bengali." Hindus commonly used Persian words and phrases in their verse, but we cannot call it "Muslim Bengali", or in the words of Bharatchandra in Mansingha Kavya, (1752) "Dobhashi Bangla" —a dual language. In the *Mansa Mangal* of Bipradas Pipilai (1493 A.D.), *Chandi Mangal* of Kavikankan (1576) and *Dharma Mangal* of Ghanaram (1709) the Dobhashi style of language is employed sporadically, in their descriptions of Muslims characters or Muslim life and culture of Bengal.

Dobhashi Bangla or *Muslim Bengali* is a creation of the British period. It was the popular language of the Muslims of south Bengal who were influenced by the Wahhabi movement. As Hunter writes "To this day the peasantry of the Delta is Mohammedan. So firmly did Islam take hold of lower Bengal, that it has developed a religious literature and a popular dialect of its own. The *Patois* known as Mussalman Bengali is as distinct from the Urdu of Upper India, as the Urdu of North India is different from the Persian of Herat."

By 'lower Bengal' Hunter really means Hooghly, Howra,

24-Parganas, Calcutta, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Barisal and Jessore. Titumir (1831) and Dudu Mia (1847) were residents of this area. Their movements for religious reform called the Wahhabi and Farayezi movements respectively, influenced this area, long before the Bengali Hindus had taken the lead in cultivating their mother-tongue. For political reasons, the Muslims received step-motherly treatment from the British, and Hindus gained more and more influence in the public life of Bengal. The continued Hindu-British hostility to Muslims resulted in a recrudescence of Muslim consciousness of their separate identity and the Muslims especially of lower Bengal, filled their language with more and more Arabic, Persian and Urdu words. This language gained popularity through the Wahhabi and Farayezi movements and a good deal of religious literature was produced in it. The "Bat-Tala" publications of Calcutta did a brisk trade by printing and publishing these books. Until much later, high-brow Bengalis contemptuously called this literature "Bat-Tala" publications. Even today the term is used to express opprobrium.

Needless to say, the most of the traditional literature that we are discussing in this chapter, is written in the old literary Bengali of the Muslims. This literature has true literary merits, and its general cultural outlook is that of the Mughal period. One of the poets of this period is Muhammad Raza who was born at the fag-end of the Mughal rule and lived upto the beginning of the British regime (1691—1767).

1. Muhammad Raza (1691—1767)

The life of this poet was spent in the transitional period when

power was passing from the Mughal to British hands. Some twenty years ago a brief article on this poet appeared in the now defunct journal, "Satyavarta" published from Chittagong. From it we learn that the poet was an inhabitant of village Bakhtpur in Fatikehari P.S. of that district. His descendants are now some of the influential people of the village. According to their family accounts, he was born in 1691 A.D. (1053 Maghi) and died in 1767 A.D. (1129 Maghi).

His reputation did not remain confined to his district. His "Tamim Golal" published by Bat-Tala reached almost every home in Bengal. It is a narrative poem, its full title being, "Tamim Golal O Chaturna Chillal", and describes the love-affair of the Mughal prince Tamim Golal with Shirazi princess Chaturna Chillal. The hero and heroine saw each other in dream and burnt with the desire to meet in reality. They were married in dream according to "Gandarva" custom, but how were they to meet ?

All day long the girl gathers flowers
In order to garland Golal at night;
But the man for whose sake she takes such pains is not to be seen :
Then what are the garlands good for!

When the king of Shiraz saw his daughter in this plight, he made plans for her marriage. A "soyamvar" was held. Princes came from far and wide to seek her hand, among them Golal himself. The ordeal set for them required that they would ride the wild horse; kill the panther that ravaged the city of Shiraz; kill the man-eating she-giant of Shiraz; chain Giant Balamitra and destroy Ripuraj.

Tamim Golal accomplished the deeds and won Chaturna Chilal, both living happily ever afterwards.

His second poem "*Misri Jamal*", too is a love-poem, describing the love-affairs of Misri Jamal, the daughter of king Abdul Karim of Kurvar and Torab Hamim, the son of King Shareef Sultan of Bimal city. They fell in love with each other on seeing each other's portraits, and after many adventures were at last married.

As narratives, these poems have nothing remarkable in them, but they have two distinctions. In the first place, these poems do not contain the lengthy invocations which earlier poems invariably have. The author has done with the invocation in two lines. Secondly, he has altered the usual method of putting the colophon verse at the end of a stanza and inserts it either at the beginning or about the middle.

2. **Ali Raza** (1695—1780 A.D.)

Ali Raza is a mystic poet who was born in village Oshkhain, in Anwara P.S. of Chittagong. His grave is near the house where he lived. He is generally known as Kanu Fakir. His descendants are still living in that village, from whom we gather that he died in 1142 Maghi or 1780 A.D. at the age of 90. His son's name was Sharafatullah. He lived for nearly 80 years, until about 1840 A.D.

Ali Raza's master in mysticism was Shah Qiyam-ud-din. He himself had a large number of followers. The following of his works have so far come to light: (a) *Siraj Qulub*, (b) *Jnan-Sagar*, (c) *Agam*, (d) *Dhyanmala*, (e) *Yogaqalandar*, (f) *Shat-*

Chakra-Bhed.

Besides these, he composed a large number of Maarefati songs and Padavalis, a few of which are found in Ragmala.

Bangiya Sahitya Parishad has published an edition of *Jnan-Sagar*. *Agam* and *Jnan-Sagar* are only two parts of the same work with different titles, but the title of the whole work is not known.

In his poem we find a mixture of Tasawwuf with the yoga. Just as in *Majma'ul Bahrain*, Dara Shikoh has tried to bring out the essential unity of Hindu and Muslim cultures, so this work too appears to lay stress on that unity.

3. Muhammad Muqim

Muhammad Muqim is one of the most powerful poets of this period. He was a spiritual disciple of Ali Raza. Speaking of him the poet says, "Know then, that my heart is full of love for him". He has thrown considerable light on a rather dark period of Muslim literature by giving in his poem *Gul-i-Bakawali* a list of the names of his predecessor and contemporary poets. The practice was rare in old and middle Bengali literature. We have quoted from it in previous chapters. In Faidul Muqtadi he mentions his birth-place as village Noapara in Chittagong. Navin Chandra Sen, well-known poet of modern Bengali was also born there.

From the autobiographical note given in his *Gul-i-Bakawali* we also learn that his forefathers originally lived in Feni (Noakhali), but left the place for political reasons. They first stayed for a few years at Fathabad doing business, then moved to Azimpur, and ultimately settled down at Noapara. Azimpur

is now under Fatikchari P. S. One of his forefathers called "Bara Sada" lived in that village. The eldest son of Bara Sada was Muhammad Afzal. His son was Sayyid Muhammad Daulat. Muhammad Muqim was the son of Sayyid Muhammad Daulat. Muqim lost his father in childhood. Jiban Hosain Chowdhury, the son of Kasimuddin Chowdhury, a local inhabitant, bore the expenses of his education. In his youth he used to earn his living as a clerk in the Zamindar Ali Akbar Saheb's "Kacheri". Shah Ashabuddin of Chittagong's Shah Ghazi Sharif's family came to Deyang at that time. The poet speaks highly of him in *Gul-i-Bakawali*.

It is apparent from the book that the book was translated from Persian at his instance. The *Gul-i-Bakawali* is his first work which was composed in his late youth or the middle of life. Though essentially a translation from Persian, it contains many original passages. The poem bears proof of the poet's wide range of knowledge, including Hindu Astrology, Hindu and Muslim religions, as well as rhetoric and prosody. He was also well-versed in the theory of music. In this respect no other poet except Alaol is comparable to him.

In the *invocation*, we notice something quite new. He has of course invoked the mercy of *God*, and the blessings of the Prophet and his companions; but the passage also glorifies his own forefathers, four Peers, twelve Imams and the fourteen Sufi sects. After that he mentions seven skies, seven seas, seven masses of land and mountain-ranges, and also the seven thrones on earth. In this connection he gives a detailed account of the throne of Delhi. We do not know the exact date of *Gul-i-Bakawali*, but we can get some idea of it from the

line that reads, "The English king belongs to the race of Firangis". It was in 1760 that the English obtained Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong districts from Meer Qasim. Probably *Gul-i-Bakawali* was composed immediately after this transfer of power. Subsequently the poet composed three more poems. Probably his last work is *Faidul Muqtadi*. In his preface to this work the poet refers to two other works entitled *Kalakam*, *Mrigavati* and *Ayyub Navir Katha*. But these have not been discovered as yet. He makes it clear that these three were religious works which he composed according to the direction of his Peer, Ali Raza.

It is not a narrative poem, but a religious work. The chronogram appended to the work gives the date of composition as 1135 Maghi or 1773 A.D. That is, *Faidul Muktadi* was composed by Muqim sixteen years after the Battle of Plassey. It is probably a composition of his old age.

4. **Muhammad Ali** (Alive in 1773 A.D.)

According to his autobiographical note he belonged to Adilpur village of Azimnagar in Chittagong. He was a contemporary of poet Muqim, and in his eulogy of Chittagong in the preface to his work, "Hayrat-ul-Fiqh", speaks of him as "the best of the learned" of his day. This poem was written at the suggestion of Yusuf Hafiz, a landlord of Lelang. It is a book of Fiqh, the Muslim religious law, being actually the translation of a Persian work of this name, meaning "Startling facts about the Fiqh". Indeed it poses some very peculiar questions of religious law and tries to answer them. As an

example we may quote the following :

I tell you of a cruel man,
Who keeps a Muslim in prison
And does not give him anything to eat.
He keeps him thus for two or three days,
Then places before him pig's meat,
And commands him to take it.
Now say whether the Muslim should eat it or not ?
How long can he go without eating ?
To refuse it would be suicide, which cannot be good.

He wrote two narrative poems as well, viz., *Shahapari Mallikjada* and *Hasan Banu*. Shahapari's island is to the south of Chittagong but who this fairy was, is difficult to ascertain. We have already referred to a few such fairies. Only two leaves of *Hasan Banu's* manuscript have been discovered, in which the prince of *Sham (Syria)* appears to be mad with love for Hasan Banu. On seeing her portrait, he sets out in search of her. In this poem, composed under the patronage of a gentleman named Yar Ali, the poet has copied the Persian metre.

5. **Muhammad Qasim** (1790)

A poem by him recently came to light through an article in the 'Mah-i-Nau' (Bengali), Falgun, 1358 issue. The late Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad mentioned him in his work *Bangla Prachenn Punthi Vivaran*. So far only three of his works have been found viz., (a) *Hitopodesh*, (b) *Sultan Jamjama*, and (c) *Sirajul Qulub* (1790).

From the long autobiographical note given by the poet in

Sirajul Qulub we learn that his father's name was Shah Aziz and that he was born in the "Kingdom of Jugidia" in Noakhali, which of course is no longer a kingdom, but a small village. It was composed in 1197 Maghi or 1790 A.D., the purpose of the poet being to preach the blessings of Islam to the Muslims of Bengal who were ignorant of Arabic. The work is divided into fifteen chapters, relating to such subjects as *Zikr*; *Bismillah*; *Surah Fatiha*; prayer; fasting; *Hadith*; visitation of the angels in the grave; rights of parents; words of wisdom from the Quran; the day of judgment; the Heavens, etc.

His *Hitopodesh* is not a translation of the Sanskrit work of that name but rather a book on Tasawwuf or Sufism. It is perhaps a free translation of an Arabic work entitled, *Burhan-ul-A'rifin*. Sultan *Jamjama's* story is a popular one among Muslims. It is an account of life after death which Sultan Jamjama gave on being brought back to life by Jesus. The moral is that befitting reward is to follow earthly deeds.

Muhammad Qasim is essentially a religious writer with a distinguished literary style. His works were intended for moral benefit of the common people and just fulfil that end.

6. Sayyid Nuruddin (1725—1798)

Sayyid Nuruddin is the best of the poets who wrote religious poems. He is said to have been an inhabitant of Chittagong. His works are more faithful in spirit and form to the Arabic and Persian originals and also more erudite than any we have seen. Copies of his poems are preserved at many places, written both in Bengali and the Arabic scripts. The oldest

dated manuscript in the Arabic script belongs to 1853. Those in Bengali script are dated earlier. We have been able to trace the following works of this poet: (a) Haqaik or Dakaik-ul-Haqaik, (b) Musar Sawal, (c) Rahat-ul-Qulub or Qiyamat Nama, and (d) Hitopodesh or Burhan-ul-Arifin.

The epitome *Dakaik* consists of 22 *babs* or chapters. It is the translation of a work of Arabic Fiqh entitled, "Kanzub-Dakaik" by Imam Hafizuddin Abul Barkat Abdullah bin Ahmed Nasfi (d.710 A. Hizri or 1310 A.D.). There are several commentaries of the original work. It is not known whether the poet had access to any of them. It is stated in the book that "Sayyid Nuruddin, son of Aziz" composed it in the year "Twelve hundred and seventy nine" (Bengali era) or 1790 A.D.

Musar Sawwal is a small work in only 12 sheets of manuscript. This too is not an original work, but perhaps the summary of a Persian or Arabic original, though not a literal translation of it; he says :

> "Nuruddin read these questions and answers in a book and composed this work, his mind full of the thoughts purely religious. The dialogue takes place between God and Prophet Moses."

The work containing dialogues between God and prophet Moses, has a purely literary theme.

Rahatul-Qulub is a huge work, based on a Persian book of the same name. It consists of 19 chapters, dealing with Resurrection; rights of parents; Heaven and Hell; usuary; lying; backbiting; jealousy and general laws of piety—a valuable work for any good Muslim.

Another work by him, Hitopodesh, contains a Sufistic dis-

coveries. Besides being a learned divine, he had a deep insight into Sufism, but always stuck to the path of Shariat. His works do not show if he was the disciple of a Peer. According to the poet himself, the work was composed in 1203, Bengali era, or 1796 A.D.

7. Sayyid Hamza (1742—1806 Poetic life)

The name of Sayyid Hamza's original birth-place was Udna or Aduna in Bhurshut Pargana on the border of Hooghly district. He is known to have composed his works between 1742—1806. In 1792 A D., floods of the river Damodar forced him out of his home to take refuge in Ranaghat village, in Raida Pargana. His grandfather was Sayyid Abdul Qadir and his father's name was Sayyid Hidayatullah. He had two sons : Kalimuddin and Kutubuddin. This is all the account of his life known to us.

Only five of his works have been discovered, four of which are named in his book "Hatim Tai", viz. *Madhumalati*, *Amir Hamza*, *Jaigun Punthi*, and *Hatim Tai*, which appear to have been written in the same order. *Sonabhan* was his fifth and last work.

The *Madhumalati* was probably composed in 1790. There are a few interesting points about this book. It is not written in "Dobhashi" Bengali of Lower Bengal, but in the standard literary language of the day. It is also superior to his other works both in expression and imagery, being written in a clear natural style. It has nothing to do with Muslim life or religion, being a purely literary work intended to give poetic

pleasure. Its language is a proof that upto Sayyid Hamza's time (1800 A.D.) the Muslims of lower Bengal employed standard Bengali in their literary works, resorting to Dobhashi Bangla only when writing on religion or Muslim life. It also shows that Dobhashi Bengali was an inferior poetic medium to standard Bengali.

Amir Hamza is an elaboration of the small poem of this name written by his predecessor, Garibullah, which the poet considered inadequate. The poet admits in humility that Garibullah "the master of poets" was superior to himself, but that the original poem did not satisfy readers' quest for narrative details. He has, therefore, given copious accounts of Amir Hamza's innumerable adventures. The poem is written throughout in "Payar", except a few verses at the end, which are composed in "Tripadi". The book bears the date of composition as 1201 Bengali era.

Jaiguner Punthi was composed in 1204 Bengali or 1797 A.D. The story treates of the fight between Jaigun and Muhammad Hanifa ending with the victory of the latter.

Hatim Tai his fourth work, was started at the request of a certain gentleman called Shah Izzatullah, but he soon withdrew his patronage and the poet for a time left it unfinished, until pursuaded to take it up again by Shaikh Kalimullah. the son of Shaikh Chand Molla of Bhurshut. He had stopped, at the Sixth Question, but now finished it by adding two more parts. Chand Molla or his son could not read or write, but enjoyed listening to poetry as the poet has hinted in his dedication of the work to them. This is a bulky book and the language is rather laboured. The poet has tried to moralize on Hatim's

adventures.

The last work *Sonabhan*, was rather a small poem, composed in Dobhashi language.

All his works were reproduced in print at Bat-Tala, and may be found in many Muslim houses. Until recently high-browed persons among the Muslims of Bengal found plenty of amusement in these books.

8. Poet Chuhar (1770—1840)

He is known to have been alive between 1804—1835. From his autobiographical notes we learn that his ancestor, Azmat, came from Gaud and settled down in Bansh Khali in Chittagong. Magh King admired Azmat's son Kamal Mridha. Our poet was the sixth descendant of Azmat and his father's name was Waizuddin. His peer was Matiullah, and patron, Jafar Ali Chowdhury of Dohajari, was the attorney of the East India Company in Chittagong and also as the poet says, worked in the mint at Calcutta. It was at Chittagong that he met the poet and pursuaded him to write the poem. The poet's autobiographical notes give an approximate idea of his dates. The mint of the East India Company was established in Calcutta in 1804, and William IV's bust started appearing on the Company's coins in June, 1835. Hence we conclude that the poet was alive between those dates.

We have so far heard of four of his works, but the manuscript of only one—*Azar Shah Shamarukh*—has been discovered. The poet was prompted to compose two of his love-poems, *Monohar Madhumalati* and *Dilaram*, by his peer Matiullah. *Azar Shah Shamarukh* and *Sujan Chitravati*, also love-poems, were composed at the request of Jafar Ali.

The last portion of the manuscript of *Azar Shaha Shamarukh* that we have seen, is torn. The story is as follows : Azar Shah, the childless king of Abiz was told by the learned divines of several lands that Queen Sunala would never bear him a child, and that he would die without an issue unless he married Shamarukh, the daughter of king Mashrik. Through the good offices of an old minister, the marriage was at last celebrated. This roused the jealousy of Queen Sunala who cleverly administered a potion to the king that made him lose his manliness. However, an apothecary restored his lost power to the king, and Shamaruk at last became pregnant. Then through some mischief of Sunala, the King fell into a malady of grave danger. The old minister set out in search of a cure for the spell; wandering from country to country, encountering strange experiences at last came to Baghdad to seek the blessings of a Peer named Safahan. He meets the Peer, but there the incomplete manuscript ends.

The poet Chuhar has generally imitated Aloal and some of his other predecessors, but his work is distinguished by considerable scholarship, and his power of versification also deserves praise. The work also bears evidence of his deep knowledge of Hindu religion and Astrology.

(9) Hamidullah Khan (1808—1870)

Khan Bahadur Hamidullah Khan is well-known to the people of Chittagong as the founder of the market called "Lamar Bazar" situated not too far from "Bahshir Hat." He was a

great scholar of Arabic and Persian, besides possessing a good command of Bengali language. So far as we have been able to ascertain he lived from 1808—1870, being fifty in 1857, when he rendered considerable help to the Company, in recognition whereof the title of "Khan Bahadur" was conferred on him.

We have already said that Hamidullah was the last of the line of the poets, who upheld the traditions of the Mughal period. He was of course, followed by a few more who were comparatively free from the new influence of their time but they were not deeply versed in Persian and only had a superficial acquaintance with the Mughal tradition. Hamidullah Khan is well-known to historians as the author of *Tawarikh-i-Hamidia*. This work though not a chronological history of Chittagong, is however, full of facts about Chittagong.

Few, however, know of his flights from the rose-garden of Persian to sing in the lotus-land of Bengali literature. His Bengali writings are few but fascinating. We have seen only two of his works, *Tranpath* and *Shahadatudyan* or *Gulzar-i-Shahadat*. He also wrote a prose work referred to in *Bangla Prachin Puthir Vivaran*, but we have seen no detailed account of it anywhere.

Gulzar-i-Shahadat is a poem about the Karbala. It is said in its long preface, that the poet wrote it when he was fifty-five years old and he appears to be very sad at his old age.

The actual date can be derived from the chronogram "Ramzan Faqat" (1280 A.H.), by the "Abjad" system of numerical letters. Thus he finished writing this book in 1863

A.D. when he was fifty-five years old and was, therefore, born in 1808 A.D.

His *Rah-i-Nijat* or *Tranpath* was composed in 1868 A.D. It is a compilation of religious injunctions for good Muslims. His comments on shaving of beards are interesting. He probably wrote more poems in 1865—or 1866, but their subjects or titles are not known. Hamidullah's work marks the transition from the Mughal to the Modern School of Bengali Poetry.

CHAPTER III

New Tendencies in Bengali Literature

(a) The Direction

The Muslim Bengali literature of modern times is a product of Western influences, which were brought to bear on our cultural life by the wide-spread teaching of English.

We have seen how the Muslims, for religious, economic, and political reasons, for a long time treated English education with cold contempt; which, however, went on spreading, ever since the establishment of the Fort William College. It was not until late in the 19th century that they were at last reconciled to the study of English. Thus the Muslims of Bengal lagged at least 150 years behind the Hindus in educational progress. The development of Muslim Bengali literature consequently suffered a great setback, from which it was hard to recover.

The new instrument of literary prose, introduced by the Fort William College, did not attract the attention of the Muslims till 1857. The introduction of literary prose was no doubt the most fruitful development of those times, which led to an outburst of novel, drama, essay, short story, modern biography, journals as well as scientific literature. The traditional medium of poetry itself drew fresh inspiration from the West, imbibed new traditions and underwent a great change, both in form and spirit. When the tradition of modern Bengali prose was already well-established through the efforts of

such writers as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswer Chandra Vidyasagar, Akshay Kumar Datta, Biharilal Chakravarti, Madhusudan Datta, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhay; and when Bengali poetry was fairly well-advanced along new patterns, the Muslims still maintained their antipathy for English education and kept aloof from the new activity. That is why the Bengali literature of this period appears to be devoid of characteristic Muslim traits, and is indeed predominantly Hindu in spirit and content. The Muslims had really made no substantial contribution to it. It would be vain to look for Muslim impress on a literary tradition which they did not shape.

Outmoded tales of Muslim origin like *Tota Kahani* and *Gul-i-Bakawali*, which some Hindu writers published from Fort William, stood no comparison with the more vigorous Bengali literature, inspired by Western influences. However, modernized versions of a few traditional Muslim themes still gained popularity, like Mir Musharraf Husain's *Vishad Sindhu* (1885), which fascinates Hindus and Muslims alike. More such efforts if made by Muslim writers would possibly keep the Muslim tradition alive; and but for their educational backwardness, their contribution to Bengali Literature would be as rich as that of the Hindus. There would possibly be many a towering genius besides Nazrul Islam.

Starting about 1800, the revolutionary trends in Bengali prose and poetry were already well-established by 1857. As the new literature was mainly the creation of the Hindus, it could not but take shape after their native genius, and is full of Hindu lore, philosophy and mythology. However, the traditional Hindu spirit did not at all penetrate the Muslim mind.

The predominance of Sanskrit words in the Bengali language can scarcely be called a Hindu trait. We have already seen that the literary language of Hindus and Muslims during the medieval period, was Sanskritised Bengali, which later came to be known as "standard" Bengali. The "Muslim Bengali" or Dobhashi Bangla" is basically the same language as "standard" Bengali. The 'Dobhashi Bangala' movement in the 18th-19th centuries purporting to eject Sanskrit words from Bengali, and bring it closer to Urdu, produced no substantial results. Similarly the Persianized Bengali used by the scholars of Fort William College, in such early works as *Pratapadiya Charit*, *Gul-i-Bakawali* and *Tota Kahani*, did not gain currency.

Even after the uprising of 1857, when the Muslim resistence to English education slackened and they opened their mind to new influences, the progress was necessarily slow because of their economic backwardness. The common folk contented themselves with listening to "Punthis" published from *Bat-Tala*. In the higher strata of Muslim society, it was still a moot point whether their language should be Urdu or Bengali. For a time there was a regular campaigning in favour of the adoption of Urdu; but these attempts met with early failure.

It was the Muslim middle class which first arose to the realities of the situation, and gradually took to learning English, for without it no government or commercial jobs would be open to them. Higher education was beyond them—and this was a big handicap—but environments seem to have been congenial for literary activity.

This is proved by the emergence of a number of powerful writers, all from the middle class. Among them, Mir

Musharraf Husain (1848—1911), Kaikobad (1858—1951), Dad Ali (1856—1930), Shaikh Abdur Rahim (1859—1931), Muhammad Muzammil Huq (1862—1902), Munshi Mehrullah, Pandit Riazuddin, Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad (1869—1953), Maulana Muniruzzaman Islamabadi (1875—1950), are illustrious figures in Muslim Bengali literature.

(b) The Path-finders

1. *Mir Musharraf Husain* (1847—1911), was the foremost Muslim writer of the modern period. Mir Musharraf Husain was a junior contemporary of Bankim Chandra (1838—1894). He was born in Lahinipada village in Kustia subdivision in Nadia (the present Kushtia district), in 1848. He could not receive higher English education; but his literary genius flowered early and his first work *Ratnavati*, a novel, was published in 1869, when he was 21 years of age. His last work was *Amar Javatni*. It came out in twelve successive volumes, from 1908 to 1910 A.D. Between *Ratnavati* and *Bibi Kulsum*, there appeared nearly 30 other works, among them novels, dramas (including comedy), poems, lyrical drama, essays, social sketches, and so on. His works include :

Ratnavati (1869—novel)
Gauri Setu (1873—Poetry)
Vasanta Kumari (1873—drama)
Jamindar Darpan (1873—drama)
Vishad Sindhu (1885—1891—Historical novel on Muharram)
Sangit Lahari (1888—Songs)

Gojeevan (Essay)
Behula Gitabhinay (1889. Lyrical drama)
Udaseen Pathiker Moner Katha (Novel)
Gaji Miar Vastani (1898—1900 Social (Sketch)
Milad Sharif— 1902 (Verse and Prose—religious work)
Musalmaner Bangala Shikkha (1903—1908—on Education),
Amar Jivani (1908—10 Autobiography)
Bibi Kulsum (1910 Biography)
Bibi Khodijar Vivaha (1905—Biographical poem).
Hazrat Omarer Dharmajivan Labh (1905—Biographical poem)
Hazrat Belaler Jivani (1905—Biographical poem)
Hazrat Amir Hamzar Dharmajivan (1905—Biographical poem)
Madinar Gaurab (1905—poetry)
Muslim Viratta (1907— ,,)
Islamer Jay (1908— ,,)
Vajimat (1908— ,,)

He was a versatile literary genius. His Vishad-Sindhu is recognized as an invaluable work. His accounts of the past glory of the Muslims are deeply pathetic and played a great part in bringing about the Muslim awakening in Bengal.

2. *Poet Kaikobad* (1852—1951): His real name was Muhammad Qasim al-Quraishi. He was three years older than Rabindranath, but lived longer. He was born at village Agla in Nawabganj subdivision of Dacca, in 1853, but his paternal home was in Parail village in Faridpur He lost his father at the age of 12; the mother had died earlier. He had his education at Dacca where he lived with his maternal uncle; but left the school without passing the Entrance Examination,

to take up a job in the Postal department. He died in Dacca Medical College Hospital in 1951.

He brought out two collections of poems during his student life, viz. 'Biraha Vilas', and 'Kusum Kanan'. Charmed by his poetry a young Hindu girl named "Giribala" fell in love with him. The affair had a deep influence on his poetic career. A few poems of the collection, "Asrumala" are dedicated to the girl. Asrumala was his third collection, but it was the first significant work, which brought him fame. It was in 1904 A.D. (1811 Bengal) that his best work "Mahashamshan Kavya" first appeared. It glorifies the victory of Ahmad Shah Abdali over the Marathas in the battle of Panipat. As a writer of epics, he ranks with Michael, Hemchandra and Navin Sen. His second and third epics—Shiva Mandir and Muharram Sharif—came out in 1917 and 1933, respectively. A book of lyrics entitled *Amiya Dhara* was published in 1923 A.D.

Besides these, he has eight more works to his credit. They are (1) *Premer Phul*, (2) *Premer Rani*, (3) *Premer Teertha*, (4) *Mandakini Dhara*, (5) *Anutapta Musalman*, (6) *Prem Kunja* or *Bada Peer*, (7) *Prem Parjat*, (8) *Upadesh Ratnavali*. His genius was mainly lyrical and the lyrical quality also dominates his epics; which, however, seem to have been written with the object of inspiring heroism in his people.

3. *Shaikh Abdur Rahim* (1859—1931): He was born in village Muhammadpur of Baduria P.O. in Bashirhat subdivision in 24-Praganas. He was able to get high school education through the generosity of a Zamindar of Taki, Babu Radhamadhav Basu. Taking up the career of a journalist, he brought out a weekly, the Sudhakar (8th November, 1889 A.D.), which

was later followed by *Mihir-o-Sudhakar*. In 1904, he lent staunch support to the Muslim agitation against the annulment of the Partition of Bengal, as a result of which *Mihir-o-Sudhakar* had to be closed down. His next venture was *Muslim Hitaishi*, which lasted till 1914. His works include :

(1) *Jehad* (1890)
(2) *Samaj-o-Sanskar* (1890)
(3) *Suria Vijay* (1895)
(4) *Islam Niti Pt. I* (1925)
(5) Islam Niti Pt. II (1927)
(6) Namaz Shiksha (1917)
(7) Hazrat Muhammader Jiban Charit (1931)
(8) Roza Tattva (1927)
(9) Namaz Tattva (1926)
(10) Khutba (1928)
(11) Quran-o-Hadithver Upadeshavali (1926)

Hazrat Muhammader Jiban Charit-o-Dharma Tattva, his most famous work, was the first biography of the Holy Prophet by a Bengali Muslim.

4. *Dad Ali* (1856—1927) : He was born in Ati village in Kushtia in 1856. Though he received no higher education, his poetic genius was surpassing. There is a depth of feeling in his poetry, though its intellectual content is not great.

His first work, *Bhagna-paran*, contains poems composed immediately after the death of his wife. The *Shantikunja* another short collection of devotional songs has considerable poetic merit. The *Ashiq-i-Rasul* containing Natia songs—sung in praise of the Prophet—is popular in Muslim homes. His

Antime Mrityu is a book of poems on Death.

5. *Muhammad Muzammil Haq* (1860—1933) : He hailed from Santipur in Nadia. Though he was not lucky enough to get higher education, he had an excellent command not only of Bengali, but also of English and Persian.

Among the large number of his books, the following are specially noted :

(a) *Jatiya Sankalpa*	(Poetry)
(b) *Hazrat Mohammad*	(Biographical Poem)
(c) *Maharshi Mansur*	(Biography)
(d) *Tapash Kahini*	(,,)
(e) *Firdausi Charit*	(,,)
(f) *Shahnama*	(Criticism)
(g) *Johra*	(Novel)
(h) *Jatiya Foara*	(Poetry)
(i) *Tipu Sultan*	(History)

The *Jatiya Sankalpa* and *Jatiya Foara* are spirited works which did a great deal to arouse the Muslims of Bengal. His fame mainly rests on these two works, but *Hazrat Muhammad* is perhaps a greater poem. *Firdausi Charit*, *Maharshi Mansur* and *Shahnama* are excellent prose works. The *Tipu Sultan* is another soul-stirring work that heroises the battles of the valiant Sultan of Mysore. His masterly command of *Standard Bengali* could be envied by any Hindu writer of his day.

6. *Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad* (1869—1953) : Born in Suchakradandi village near Patia P.S. in Chittagong in 1869, as a posthumous child, he was reared up by his grandfather and uncle. He was a bright boy at school who passed his entrance examination with Sanskrit as a subject. He also joined the

college but due to prolonged illness, could not appear at the F.A. examination. He earned his living as a clerk in the office of the Divisional Inspector of Schools.

Even as a boy, he felt unhappy at the fact that the Muslims had lost their traditional distinction in letters and learning. He was anxious to restore the tradition among his people and whole-heartedly dedicated himself to literary research. To him goes the credit of salvaging nearly 2,000 manuscripts of ancient and mediaeval Bengali literature from obscurity. He accomplished this vast research work, all by himself. Nearly twelve hundred of these manuscripts belong to Muslim authors, which he donated to Dacca University. The manuscripts of Hindu writers are preserved with the *Rajshahi Varendra Research Society*. He was not merely a collector, but carried out useful research with scholarly devotion and ability. There was hardly another who could read old manuscripts so easily as if they were printed works of today. He discovered more than 150 Muslim poets and writers. Thanks to his discoveries, it can now be said that in spite of the dark spell that later befell them, the Muslims, were far ahead of the Hindus in literary production, even for a hundred years after the establishment of British rule in this country. The results of his endeavours are contained in more than 600 invaluable articles and papers, based on original material. The literary societies of Chittagong and Nadia expressed their respect for him by offering him the endeared titles of "Sahitya Visharad" and "Sahitya Sagar", respectively. Pakistan government also honoured him by granting a literary pension of Rs. 50/- per month.

He has also edited many old books, being the first Muslim

scholar of Bengal to do so. Shaikh Faizullah's *Garakkha Vijay* Ratidev's *Mrigalubdha* and Ali Raza's *Jnan Sagar* were all edited by him. His *Bangla Prachin Punthir Vivaran* (in two parts) is an invaluable guide to research work in Bengali. The address which he delivered as the president of "Bangiya Muslim Sahitya Samity" is also a valuable literary work. The *Arakan Rajshabhay Bangla Sahitya* which he jointly compiled with Dr. Md. Enamul Huq, is another monument of his scholarship. Alaol's *Padmavati* edited by him and *Muslim Prachin Punthir Vivaran* also by him, have not been published as yet. The material of *Musalman Vaishnav Kavi* (4 Vols) edited by Brajasundar Sanyal was, again, supplied by the *Sahitya Visharad*.

7. *Maulana Muniruzzaman Islamabadi* (1875—1950) : He was born in Barama village of Patia P.S. in Chittagong and grew up to become a noted scholar of Arabic, Persian and Urdu. He also possessed a working knowledge of English. Some of his articles were published in some Arabic journals of Egypt. He worked a great deal for the freedom movement and was all his life a devoted social worker. The 'Islamabad Town Bank' and the 'Orphanage' at Chittagong are two of his lasting works. Just before the partition of Bengal he was elected a member of Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Islamabadi was a well-known orator as well as an eminent journalist. It was his writings in the *Al-Islam* and the *Daily Sultan* that induced Moulana Akram Khan to become his admirer.

He was an ardent social and political worker, who did no less service to the cause of literature. Some of his books like "*Khagol Shastre Musalman*" (Muslim contribution to Astronomy),

"*Bhugol Shastre Mussalman*" (Muslim contribution to Geography), "*Bharate Muslim Sabhyata*" (Muslim civilization in India) are works of original research. His knowledge of the Muslim world, its present trends and movements, was very deep, as might be seen from works like "*Muslim Jagater Abhyutthan* and *Constantinople*". *Quran-o-Rajniti* is a valuable contribution to political science. Besides these, quite a large number of thoughtful articles by him were published in his paper *Al-Islam*. The series of articles entitled *Quran-o-Vijnan* bears eloquent testimony to his deep knowledge of religion as well as the modern sciences. Among the pioneer group of modern poets and writers Pandit Riazuddin (d. 1919) and Munshi Meherulla also deserve to be noted. In fact, in literary excellence, they surpassed their contemporaries, except perhaps Michael and Bankim.

Just as the new awakening brought about by Western education revived the national consciousness of the Hindus—which is manifest in their writings—so the Muslims, though they were far behind the Hindus in education, gradually discovered new pride in their own national heritage. Muslim Bengali Literature of this period surges with this renewed consciousness of Muslim nationalism. There are no grounds for the belief that English education Hinduised the Muslims. Subsequent Muslim writings further give the lie to this misconception.

The reaction of Hindus and Muslims to English education was fundamentally the same: it led them to an attempt at self-analysis. As they knew themselves, they also realized that their paths lay in different directions. It became more and more

clear that the Hindus were Hindus and Muslims were Muslims and that they could not merge to become one nation. They knew from History how a synthesis of the Hindu Muslim cultures was attempted at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, and proved abortive.

The period saw the sprouting of the new nationalist sentiment, and the writers from Mir Musharraf Husain to Islamabadi, toiled to nurture and rear it up to full bloom. The division of Bengal in 1904 was a triumph for the Muslims who now felt secure from Hindu exploitation. Alas, it was too short-lived; for the decision was soon annulled by the British Government under the pressure of Hindu agitation against it, in 1906.

(c) The Pioneers

The succeeding generation of Muslim Bengali writers accomplished what Mir Musharraf Husain and others started to do. The new group was also larger than the earlier group, and their works were also richer and more ripe. The leader of this group was the famous poet, novelist, essayist, orator and social worker, Sayyid Ismail Husain Shirazi.

1. *Sayyid Ismail Husain Shirazi* (1880—1931) : He was born in Sirajganj in Pabna on 16th July, 1880. Because of poverty, he could not receive higher education. Still the knowledge he acquired by independent study was a credit to his great mental capacities. He was inspired by an ambition to serve his country as well as his community, and he pursued it by literary writing as well as by platform speaking. He was one of the stalwarts

of our freedom movement, and suffered much for this at the hands of the British. He fought with the English on the one hand and the Hindus on the other, with Herculean heroism. His book of poems, *Anal Pravaha* is a lasting monument to his noble efforts. He composed it in the metre which Hemchandra used in his *Bharat Sangit* and it proved more effective in his hands than British bullets. No wonder that the English Government banned the book.

He fought against British domination as a follower of the Indian National Congress, alongside the Hindus; but his love for Islam and Muslims was great. When the Turks were on the point of losing the Balkan Wars, he went out to fight for Turkey in the company of the Congress President, Dr. Ansari. He stayed in Turkey for two years and won much honour and praise there. When the Sultan awarded him robes of honour and the title of Ghazi, he surprised everyone at the ceremony by expressing his thanks in eloquent Turkish. His Turkish memoirs are contained in an interesting book called "*Turashka Bhraman*".

Though he lived like a poor man, he was not actually poor. His generosity surpassed that of Iswarchandra, called "the ocean of kindness". He earned a lot through his books, but most of it went to the poor. He also carried out a lifelong struggle for female education. His *Stri-Shiksha* is no imaginary account of a learned man, but gives a true picture of the harmony that existed between his word and deeds. He has many books to his credit, *viz.* :

Anal Pravaha	(National poem)
Ray Nandini	(Historical novel)
Nuruddin	(Novel)

Tarabai	(Novel)
Firoza Begum	(,,)
Turashka Bhraman	(Travels)
Stri Shiksha	(Essay)
Sangit Sanjibani	(Lyric)
Premanjali	(,,)
Spain Vijay Kavvya	(Epic)
Suchinta	(Essay)
Gaurav Kahini	(Epic)
Adav Kaida Shiksha	(On etiquette)
Spenia Muslim Sabhyata	(Cultural history)
Mahashiksha Kavya	(Unpublished epic).

2. *Yakub Ali Chaudhury* (1886—1938) : He was born in Magurakandi village in Pangsha P.S. in Faridpur in 1886 A.D. He was a very bright student, but did not go further than B.A., owing to ill-health. For a few years he was a teacher at Sitakunda High School in Chittagong, but in 1920 joined the Non-Cooperation movement and left service. Since then his life was spent in national service.

His *Shantidhara* is one of the finest examples of Bengali prose. Some of the essays of that book, like *Islamer Swarup*, 'Ramzan', 'Azan', 'Nauroz', etc. written in affluent poetical style, deal with the true spirit of Islam. In his words, "Islam is only another name for the beauty that we find in the fragrance of flowers, the greenness of grass, the unending blue stretch of the horizon". The account of Prophet Muhammad's character given in his *Manab-Mukut* is a very rare piece of literary prose. His *Nur Nabi* on the same theme is a beautiful

little book for children. Before its publication no one had thought that a life of the Holy Prophet could be written in such an enchanting style. His *Dharmer Kahani* too is a meritorious work.

He was also successful as an editor of monthly journals, and edited the literary journal of Bengali Muslims, the *Koh-i-Nur*. Though primarily an essayist, he has also written some good stories. His great love for Bengali literature comes out in the following passage of his book, 'Vanga Shahitye Mussalman'.

"Then come, O you the piping birds of this garden of Muslim literature! I am again inviting you to the garden of Bengali literature. Come back here after singing in the blue skies. We have grown stiff in the joints through laziness and love of leisure; let us hear the life-giving magic of your songs. Our bodies and minds have been sapped by our work-a-day life. Give us new life and vigour, which only your music can give. Come, O Kaikobad, O Fazlul Karim, Muzammil Haq, come and play on your flutes, beat your drums; and let us renew our journey with a fresh joy and eagerness! Come Imdadul Huq, Emdad Ali, Abdul Karim, Osman Ali, Ekram Ali, illuminate our path with the light of your wisdom—your discourses on politics, sociology, philosophy, history and science! And come, you the newly educated young generation, I welcome you with all my heart. Let the world of literature be enlivened with your songs!"

3. *Lutfur Rahman* (1187—1933): Well-known as Doctor Rahman, he was an inhabitant of Jessore. He could not get University education and was all his life a Homeopathic

medical practitioner. A valetudinarian, he found consolation from literary study and writing.

Muslim Bengal has produced very few thoughtful essayists like him. His *Mahat Jivan*, *Manav Jivan*, *Unnata Jivan*, *Shaktir Jay*, are works of notable genius. In *Priti Upahar* he discusses the duties of home life. *Raihan*, a novel is a significant original creation.

4. *Muhammad Wajid Ali* (1888—1954): He was born at Banshdaha village in Satkhira sub-division of Khulna district. He studied upto the degree standard. Starting as a journalist, he struggled all his life to overcome poverty, and recently died as a poor, ailing man.

He too was primarily an essayist. The *Maru-Vhashkar* is an excellent biography of the Holy Prophet by him. He had an equal command of the colloquial and the standard language.

Besides scattered essays, he also wrote a few biographies, namely those of *Mahamanush* Muhsin; Sayyid Ahmed; Abdul Latif; and Quaid-i-Azam Mahomed Ali Jinnah.

5. *S. (Shaikh) Wajid Ali* (1888—1951): He hailed from Baratajpur village in Hoogly. He obtained his B.A. degree from Cambridge and was called to the Bar; but, on returning home, accepted a government job, later retiring as the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. There was hardly another Muslim writer in his days privileged like him to have foreign degrees.

He began writing when he was middle aged, but was quick to gain recognition as a thoughtful writer. For a long time he was the President and the soul of "Vangiya Muslim Sahitya

Samiti'' (Literary Association of Bengali Muslims) of Calcutta. In both essay and short story he compares favourably with any other writer of Bengal. He was also a powerful novelist and wrote a few dramas as well. Since Mir Musharraf Husain, no other Muslim writer had produced so many works, some of which are as follows :

Bangalir Bhavishyat	(Essay)
Mashuker Darbar	(Story)
Granadar Shesh Veer	(Historical novel)
Sultan Saladin	(Drama)
Guldasta	(Stories)
Motorjoge Ranchi Safar (To Rachi by a car)	(Travel)
Darbesher Doa	(Story)
Jivaner Shilpa	(Essay)
Amader Sahitya	(Criticism)
Allahr Dan	
Muslim Sangskritir Adarsha	(Criticism)
Akbarer Rashtra Shadhana	(History)
Bhanga Banshi	(Poetry)
Chotader Badshahi Galpa	(Children's story)
Galper Majlis	(Children's story)
Kheyaler Firdaus	
Bengalees of Tomorrow	(Essay in English)
Aligarh Memories a Persian Bouquet	(Autobiography)

6. *Najibur Rahman* (1878-1935): Najibur Rahman belonged to Pabna. He was a contemporary of Ismail Husain

Shirazi, but his genius lay in a different way. He was a born novelist who won fame on sheer merit without being affiliated to any poetical or social movement. He wrote five novels, namely, *Anoara*, *Premer Samadhi*, *Hasan Gango Bahmani*, *Gariber Meye*, and *Dunya Ar Chai Na*. *The Anoara* is his first and the best novel. The story of a middle class Muslim family has been told in such a manner that the Muslim cultural atmosphere has been vividly brought out. This book is still read in every Muslim home.

7. *Shaikh Fazlul Karim* (1882-1936): He was born at Kakinara village in Rangpur. Though he earned his fame as a poet, he is no less known as a successful prose-writer. He did not devote himself to any but the literary profession. A large number of his poems may still be found in the pages of many old journals. He showed his real power in a book of poems entitled, *Paritran*. His *Laili-Majnu*, a novel, was also popular in its day and is indeed a well-written work. In *Chintar-Chash* he has poured out thought-provoking ideas. The *Path-o-Patheya* is a collection of short stories, but not one to be thrown away after one reading. He also published a number of essays in different journals.

8. *Qazi Imdadul Huq* (1882-1926): Among the Muslim writers of this period, Qazi Imdadul Huq achieved considerable renown. Holding an onerous post in the Education Department of East Bengal, he could still pursue his literary activity with a steady zeal. His *Abdullah* portrays how the Muslims got a new life through Western education. As a social novel of Bengali Muslims it is still a

valuable book. The refined style of his *Navi Kahini* threw *Kasasul Ambia* of Bat-Tala fame out of vogue. His *Pravanadhamala* is another of his valuable contributions to the field of essays.

9. *Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain* (1880-1932): This eminent lady was born at Pairaband village in Rangpur in 1880. Sakhawat Hussain, her husband, was a Deputy Magistrate in Bihar. She was a lady of uncommon ability gained by self-education. After her husband's premature death she devoted herself to social and literary work. An ardent advocate of female education, she founded the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta. The "Abarodh Vashini" (in chains) gives a pathetic account of the condition of women in the society of her days and contains a forceful appeal for the betterment of their lot. The 'Sultana's Dream' is a fascinating novel by her, written in English. Two other novels, *Matichur* and *Padmarag*, showed what our women were capable of achieving in the realm of letters. She was indeed the foremost female writer of her day, and the pioneer of progress among Muslim Women.

10. *Ikramuddin* (1882-1935): A powerful writer of this period, he belonged to Burdwan and was a high Government official. He distinguished himself as a critic, a novelist and a short story writer. His *Rabindra Pratibha* was the first critical appreciation of Tagore by a Muslim. The *Kanch-o-Mani* is a good novel by him. The *Natun Ma*, also a novel, vividly brings out the tragic results of polygamy in a Muslim family. He was also one of the authors of the novel, "*Baroari*".

11. *Shahadat Hussain* (1893—1953): Poet Shahadat Hussain was born in Punditpol village under the De-Ganga P.S. of 24-Parganas. He had an intermittent school education, but early in life came in contact with writers like Girish Chandra Ghosh, Amritalal Basu, D. L. Ray, and also became, a well-known actor. At the same time he taught in a school; but his serious studies only began when he became the first librarian of Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samiti. During the year 1919, he was associated with the Monthly 'Saogat', afterwards editing the *Sahachar* and the *Weekly Mohammadi*. He also courted arrest during the non-cooperation movement of 1931, and was jailed. After independence he left his home for Pakistan and got a job in the Radio. In 1953, he went home to meet his relations, when he was suddenly taken ill and died in a hospital.

He was sober, assiduous, full of humility and devoted to literary pursuits. His works number 45 volumes, of which the noteworthy are: in poetry, *Mridanga*, *Kalpalekha*, *Chitrapat* and *Rupacchanda*; in drama, *Sarfaraz Khan*, *Anarkali*, and *Masnader Moha*; in Novel, *Rikta*, *Juger Alo*, *Pather Dekha*, *Kanta Phul* and *Hiran Rekha*; and in Biography, *Jahanara*, *Zebunnisa*, *Nur Jahan* and *Gulbadan*; while *Mohan Bhog*, *Cheleder Galpa*, *Balikajivan* are books written by him for children. The dramas too are not only clever works, but very well-suited for the stage and deeply poetical. His novels too sparkle with real genius. He has a style of writing all his own. His poems excel for the beauty and magical music of expression.

The number of poets surviving from the pre-Independence period is large indeed. It is hardly possible to do them justice

in this volume. The writers who may be called senior contemporaries of Nazrul Islam, include Khan Bahadur Al-Hajj Ahsanullah (born 1878); Sayyid Emdad Ali (1880-1956); Maulana Akram Khan (1883); Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah (1885); Mahbubul Alam (1898); Mohammad Barkatullah (1896); Qazi Akram Husain (1896); Shaikh Habibur Rahman (1890); Ghulam Mustafa (1896) etc. etc. The leading figure among the Muslim writers of this century is Nazrul Islam (born 1899). He not only infused a new life into the literary tradition of the Muslims, but also revolutionized Bengali literature as a whole. His works mark the end of the period represented by Tagore and the opening of a new chapter in the literary history of Bengali. He was indeed the creator of the New Age.

(d) The New Era of Modern Bengali Literature

Modern Bengali literature, which was taking shape since 1800, reached its perfection in Tagore's creations (1861—1941). For the first twentyfive years of this century, no Bengalee would believe that any writer could outgrow the powerful influence of that long-lived literary giant. The Tagore period extended from the last two decades of the 19th century to the first three decades of this century lasting over half a century. Nazrul Islam's poetry is the proof that the Muslims were able to assert themselves against the powerful influence of Tagore.

Nazrul Islam (b.1899)

Nazrul Islam was born in an ancient Qazi family of the village Churulia in Burdwan district, on 11th Jaishtha, 1899 A.D. He had to give up his studies because of indigent circumstances, but acquired a good knowledge of Persian at home, according to the tradition of his family. At a young age he joined a group of *Leto* Singers in his village and composed songs for them. Later he served in a baker's shop. A police officer of Mymensingh marked his talent, took him home to stay with him, and had him admitted at the village school. There he quickly distinguished himself as a naughty boy, with a flair for poetry. In 1914, he was enrolled as a soldier in the Bengal Regiment, and went with it upto Karachi, though not beyond. He proved his mettle in the Army and was promoted to be a Havildar. It was, strangely, as a soldier in the Army that he learnt music. Returning home in 1918, he published his famous poem the "Vidrohi" in the now-defunct journal, the '*Moslem Bharat*', and was overnight famous as Havildar Qazi Nazrul Islam.

His rise as a poet was meteoric, such as few could have dreamed of. It was difficult to believe that any one could strike a note so discordant with Tagore's and yet be applauded and so soon win a place by his side. Into a garden lulled by the sweet music of Tagore, Nazrul burst like a trumpet-blast. His style was full of life and his verse moved with a masculine gait.

A few days after the publication of '*Vidrohi*', came out a journal, the "Dhumketu" (comet) edited by Nazrul Islam. Tagore himself offered his blessings to "the pilot of Dhumketu" in a poem published in the journal.

Nazrul Islam's appearance, of course, did not lessen the

glory of Tagore, but he shone by his own light, in spite of Tagore.

Nazrul gave the nation a new message of hope, stirred up its pride and confidence, roused it to a new consciousness of reality, and inspired a love of action in a people who had been living in a world of dreams. Tagore himself acknowledged the new consciousness brought out by Nazrul Islam, and expressed his admiration for him by dedicating his drama, the *Basanta* to *Nazrul*.

Nazrul's poetry gave a new turn to the development of Bengali literature. His stirring calls to fight poverty, social injustice and ignorance, went down to the soul of the people, whom he loved more than any poet ever did, and who showered their love on him as they had showered on none else. The literature that followed his creations reverberates with the same note of revolt that rings in his poetry. The softness and music of conventional poetry lost its charm. Many and varied are the trends that followed the new movement in Bengali poetry, but there is no doubt that Nazrul Islam was the pioneer poet of the new age.

He was the poet of youth, equally close to the hearts of the Hindus and the Muslims; and he was the champion of the depressed, downtrodden humanity, "those who have been wronged and deceived and in whose hearts the accumulated agony of ages is surging up". In *Samyabadi* and *Bisher Banshi*, he poured out his heart in pity for the down-trodden. These poems not only aroused the popular sentiment, but truly opened up a new chapter in Bengali poetry, which has ever since been predominantly the poetry of revolt.

He asserted the dignity of man, and speaking in the voice of a commander, urged upon the people to deliver humanity from the bondage of old conventions, superstitions, misery and distress. This was really the voice of newly awakened Islam. In this respect, Nazrul is the true descendant of his Muslim predecessors. Islam is not the religion of the weak; courage and manliness are the distinguishing marks of a true Muslim; liberty, equality, fraternity and universal love are the essence of Islam; it recognizes no barriers of colour or country. The Islamic literature created by Nazrul's predecessors had religious truth and fervour; it also showed their wide-awake interest in social and political affairs, and had close ties with the world of reality; but its poetic content was small. Nazrul's great poetic genius turned whatever he touched into gold. In his hands, Islamic literature became a live phenomenon. It is he who created a literature we can call truly Islamic. Poems like "Fateha-Doazdahum", "Muharram", "Kheya-paper Tarani", "Nutan Chand", "Khalid", "Qurbani", "Chiranjib Zaglul", "Amanullah" etc., marked the reorientation of Islam.

The introduction of the *ghazal* in Bengali literature was also an important contribution by him. In-as-much as he infused the true Islamic spirit in the Muslim youth and stirred their hearts with the urge for freedom, we can call him the pioneer poet who dreamed of Pakistan in Bengal. The post-independence Bengali literature embodies the realization of Nazrul's dreams. The Islamic atmosphere created by Nazrul in his poems, by the use of new words from Arabic and Persian, as well as the re-creation by him of Islamic ideas in

Bengali and the use of similes and metaphors that remind of Muslim classics in other languages, are closer to their spirit, set in a new fashion in Bengali poetry, which is still popular among the young Pakistani poets of Bengali.

No Bengali poet, except Tagore, comes near Nazrul in versatile creative ability and range of poetic imagination. Nazrul excells no less as a poet than as a singer and composer, as a deeply emotional novelist, story writer and dramatist. Between his first and the last book of poems *Agnivina* and *Marubhashkar*, respectively—he published poetical works, like *Bisher Banshi*, *Dolanchanpa*, *Fanimanasha*, *Bhangar Gan*, *Chhaya-nat*, *Sarbohara*, *Samyabadi*, *Chittanama*, *Sindhu Hindol*, *Chokher Chatak*, *Chakravak*, *Zanjir*, *Jhingephul*, *Sandhya*, *Chandravindu*, *Natun Chand*, which are well-known. He has also given us excellent translations from Persian in his book, entitled *Hafiz*, and from the *Quran* in the "*Ampara*". The *Byathar Dan* and *Rikter Bedan* are supreme examples of poetic prose. Some of his novels like the *Mrithu Khudha*, the *Bandhandhara* and the *Kuhelika*, and dramas like the *Aleya* and the *Jhilmili*, were novel creations each in their own way, and were widely emulated. The poetic beauties of the collections of songs, such as *Bulbul* and *Zulfikar*, remain unsurpassed.

The 25 years of his literary career from 1920-41, were marked by a continuous outpouring of poems, songs, novels, dramas, short stories, essays and translations. The poetry included Muslim national songs; Hindu devotional songs; Vaishnava padas; Sufistic Ghazals, Stories, Qasidas, as well as some literature for children. There is a strong impress of individuality on all his works and they are lit up with a sincerity of feeling and the

passion to arouse his people.

After delivering his presidential address to the Silver Jubilee Session of the Vangiya Muslim Sahitya Samaj, in 1941—which had a note of frustration at the want of love among men—the poet became silent and retired into himself.

He is alive still, but it is a virtual non-existence, for he has lost his reason. The calamity struck the hearts of the Hindus and the Muslims alike; he was sent to Europe for treatment, but alas to no result. The mind that poured out songs is dead, but the body survives, and is being maintained by pensions granted by the Governments of Bharat and Pakistan.

(e) Muslim Bengali Literature since Nazrul Islam

Nazrul's emergence proclaimed the end of the Tagore era. The old school started trailing out, but persisted for some time more, as may be seen from the writings of the Hindu and Muslim writers of the "Nazrul period". The best known poets of this period are Shahadat Hossain, Ghulam Mustafa, and Jasimuddin; but there are so many others, whom we cannot discuss in this volume, especially as we have generally left out the living writers.

1. *Ghulam Mustafa* (born 1895): He was born in village Manoharpur in the East Pakistan sector of Jessore district in 1895. Taking the B.A., B.T. degrees he started his career as a teacher, and retired as an officer of the B.E.S., to take residence in Shantinagar, at Dacca. Poems have continued to pour out from his pen. He is equally at home in prose. At one time he experimented

with new metres in Bengali Poetry, following Satyen Datta in this respect. He also tried to use some Arabic metres for Bengali verse; these metres were published in *The Pravasi*. He also has an ear for music and can compose. His poetry bears evidence of the influence of Tagore; but he is also conscious of a certain likeness between himself and Nazrul, and the influence of Nazrul is no doubt present in his Islamic songs. These songs have been collected in a book entitled "Tarana-i-Pakistan".

He has published poems, songs, novels, biographies and essays. His poetry books included such popular collections as *Raktarag*, *Khoshroz*, *Hasnahana*, *Sahara*, *Kavya-Kahini*, *Bulbulistan*. Among the novels may be named *Bhangabuk* and *Ruper Nesha*; among the biographies, that of 'Vishwanavi'; while *Islam and Jehad* is a collection of essays. He has also experimented with rhythmic prose in his translation of the *Holy Quran*. He has a wide-awake interest in the political problems of the day and has been a staunch upholder of the ideology of Pakistan.

2. *Jasimuddin* (born 1902): He was born in Tambulkhana village of Faridpur district. After passing the M.A. examination of the Calcutta University, he was engaged by the University for the compilation of a collection of folk-songs. After completing that work, he joined the Dacca University as a Lecturer in Bengali. At present he is a Publicity Officer in the Directorate of Provincial Government and has permanently settled down at Dacca.

A great lover of village-life, he has portrayed the country-side and the village-folk with a sympathy not to be seen in any

other Bengali poet. His contribution to the ballads of Bengal is incomparable. Dr. Dinesh Sen, Head of the Department of Bengali at the Calcutta University, had already taken a fancy for this budding genius while he was a student. Jasimuddin's '*Jander Dekkechi*', also records the names of a few other well-known Hindu and Muslim scholars and writers from whom he received encouragement. The "*Chaley Musafir*" an entertaining travelogue, is another work by him that gives a glimpse into his life.

Among his poetical works, *Nakshi Kauthar Math*, *Sojan Badiyar Ghat*, *Rakhali*, *Baluchar*, *Dhankhet*, *Rangila Nayer Majhi* and a few more, are invaluable additions to Bengali literature. His recent book of poems, "*Matir Kanna*", is a more sophisticated work, in which we miss the rural spirit and atmosphere of his earlier works. It has a purity of diction, uncommon in his earlier poems. A translation of the *Nakshi Kauthar Math* has appeared in English, entitled as "the field of the Embroidered Quilt". He has also attained distinction as a writer of children's literature, through such work as '*Hashu*' and '*Ek Paisar Banshi*'.

The '*Beder Meye*' is an excellent lyrical drama by him. His one-act plays and collections of Murshida, Bhatiali, Zari and other folk songs, will long be remembered.

3. *Shaikh Muhammad Idris Ali* (1895—1945): He was born of a rich family of Shibpur, in Howrah district, in 1895, and after suffering many vicissitudes in life, died a destitute in 1945. His wife was deceased five years before him, to whose memory his collection of elegies entitled "*Amar Priya*"

is dedicated. It can claim a permanent place in Bengali literature.

It was his last book of poems, which was preceded by three other collections, entitled the *Pijush Palvani*, the *Marmavani* and the *Mukti Vina*. These were very popular with the Muslim youth of Bengal. Some of his later poems had a leaven of circasm, but most of his works are lyrical in spirit, written in a fascinating style.

In between the poetic compositions, he also wrote a few novels. One of these, the *Bankim Duhita* was a satire on Hindu society, written as an answer to Bankim Chandra's strictures on Muslim life. In it he paints a rather dark picture of the Hindu Samaj, in Bankim's style, paying him, as it were, in his own coin. It was widely hailed by the Muslims. His novels include *Shukher Sangsar*, *Darvesh Kahini*, *Natun Bau*, *Adarsha Girhini*, *Premer Pathe* and *Ruper Moha*.

4. *Benazir Ahmad* (born 1903): Benazir Ahmad occupies a prominent place among the followers of Nazrul. He was born in Ilamdi village in Narayanganj subdivision of the Dacca District. Nazrul's influence is specially noticeable in his *Bandir Banshi* and *Vaishakhi*. He has also published a collection of essays, entitled, '*Islam and Communism*'.

SIXTH PART

Pakistan Era in Bengali Literature

(14th August, 1947)

Pakistan Era in Bengali Literature

(14th August, 1947

Bengal was partitioned on the 14th August, 1947. East Bengal which had a predominantly Muslim population became a part of Pakistan, and is generally known as East Pakistan. We intend to discuss in this chapter, the repercussions of this change in Bengali Literature.

Before Partition, Calcutta was the capital and the cultural centre of Bengali. All literary activity was, therefore, centralised in Calcutta. Writers seeking recognition looked up to the literary society of Calcutta and it was here that literary reputation was made or marred. On the eve of Partition, both the regions of Bengal became embroiled in communal disturbances. The average Bengali thought it to be a political fight, but since the basis of Partition was mainly ideological, it was bound to have far-reaching effects on the future development of culture in the two states.

The Partition resulted in mass migration of the population, especially of the educated classes. As Bengali Hindus were educationally more advanced, they left a wide gap in the literary life of East Bengal by their departure to West Bengal. It was only partially filled by the coming over of writers like Maulana Akram Khan, Shahadat Hossain, Shaukat Osman and Akbar-ud-din to East Pakistan. Moreover, a few well-known Muslim writers like Qazi Abdul Wadud, Humayun Kabir and Syed

Muztaba Ali either left Pakistan or remained in West Bengal.

This was, however, a temporary phase, and a whole generation of young writers has since emerged. They have shown a more than common enthusiasm for shaping up a new literary tradition. The cultural division of former Bengal is becoming more and more real and manifest. The new tradition is yet in the process of formation, not easy to define or delineate, but the trends already point to a new direction.

It is plain enough that the language of East Bengal is Bengali, and that it will, therefore, continue to be the chief vehicle of literary expression. There is a great deal of speculation about the future development of this language and very conflicting opinions are advanced by different groups; but that the language would still remain Bengali and not change into Arabic, Persian or Urdu, is not disputed. People of moderate opinion believe that, in due course, the literary language of East Bengal would become distinct from the language of West Bengal. How far the divergence would be real and effective would, however, depend on the quality and calibre of the writers we produce as they alone can give a revolutionary turn to the language. So much is generally agreed that East Bengal's literature would in future be more fully representative of Islamic ideas and Muslim sentiments. It would naturally reflect the hopes and aspirations, ideals, customs and conventions of the people of East Pakistan. A certain nationalist trend is already visible in the present day writings.

Side by side with an earnest and active desire to infuse a new spirit into Bengali literature and to develop it on truly nationalistic lines, some mis-guided attempts to cause ideological confusion are also visible. Such writings are marked by vague ambitions and reflect a torn mind. Their expression and imagery is just as confused and chaotic as their ideology.

One late development in Bengali is a growing fondness for prose. This possibly reflects the as yet unsettled rhythm of our national life. Poets who copy traditional metric patterns do not appeal to the young minds, while the popular prose-poems of recent origin incur the chagrin of elder writers. The chasm between the two generations is growing wider and wider.

It can be said that the present day literature reflects the life and aspirations of the masses in a greater degree than ever before. A good deal of present day writing is wedded to the theme of hunger and misery, but it preaches a sermon of hate rather than love and tolerance. In a great part of the works of some young poets and writers one can notice a tendency to use literature as a vehicle of political propaganda.

(a) Poetry

1. *Farrukh Ahmad*: He is noted for his new experiments in form and style. He is chiefly enamoured of the Dobhashi Punthi Literature which he has tried to emulate in his epic the *Hatim Tai*. His *Sat Sagarer Manjhi* and *Azad Karo Pakistan* had already made him known as a poet before Independence. Poems since written by him, *viz. Sirajum Munira*, *Nasihat Nama* *Tasvir Nama* etc. are so many further experiments in form.

2. *Mohiuddin* : Mohiuddin is a revolutionary, and a literary disciple of Nazrul. His reputation rests on many poetic contributions to popular literary magazines.

3. *Ahsan Habib*: He attracted attention by producing his

Ratrishesh before Independence. His recent poems are mostly satirical, of which the *Dhannyabad*, *Sandhipatra*, *Ekrarnama* and *Haq Nam Bharosha* are noted works. A recent poem by him, *Prem* shows considerable strength of style. His *Jafrani Rang Paira* is an excellent novel.

4. *Syed Ali Ahsan*: Having written some poetry before Independence, he is now specialising as a critic and essayist. His recent poetical works are only prose-poems. His works include *Prarthana*, *Kavyalok*, *Sanket and Sanghad*. In one of his essays he argues that the literary activities of the nation should, in the present phase of our life, be directed towards the stability of Pakistan. According to him "Unity and survival of our new State are more important to us than literature". Further on he says that in East Bengal our heritage mainly consists of Islamic traditions, besides innumerable punthis, folk tales, ballads, and music songs; but he regrets that only a few poets have yet made use of the material the punthis have to offer. It is his hope that a lot more poetry of this kind will be written in future, because "only thus the foundation of a new, and truly Pakistani literature, can be laid". (Mah-i-Nau, August 1951).

5. *Sadruddin*: He is mainly a writer of "prose-poems" collected in the *Paigam* and *Ak Phali Chand*. He too is deeply inspired by Pakistani nationalism.

6. *Shaikh Saifullah*: Still very young, he is nevertheless a follower of the old tradition of *Baul*, *Murshida* and *Marifati* literature. He has brought out six collections since 1947, *viz.*, the *Sangit Lahari*, *Gulbag*, *Dilbag*, *Ashruddhara*, *Abhijan* and *Jhankar*. He is also a singer and composer. Not highly educated, he is naturally gifted. He has a reformist zeal, but remains poetical throughout.

7. *Ashraf Siddiqui*: He has gained considerable honour as a poet through his popular work, the *Taleb Master*. He has also creditably edited an anthology of verse, the *Natun Kavita*.

8. *Abul Hossain*: Another rising star, his translations of Iqbal's poems are creditable and worthy of note. His own representative works are prose-poems like "*Mehedir-Jannya*" "*Madhyaprachya*", "*Amar Sonar Desh*". He has also attempted rhymed prose in *Nava Vasanta*, etc.

9. *Raoshan Izdani*: He has introduced the Mymensingh dialect in his verse. His *Chinu Bibi* and *Bajra Veena* are famous works.

10. *Begum Sufia Kamal* is the most popular poetess of East Bengal. Her *Sanjher Maya* and *Maya Kajal* have been well received on all hands.

Mahmuda Khatun Siddiqua is another well-known poetess. Her *Pasharini* published before 1947, is a poem of considerable merit. She has mostly written free verse since.

Among the women poets mention should also be made of *Shaheda Khanum*, *Jahanara Arzu*, *Latifa Rashid* and *Latifa Huq*, all of whom have given considerable proof of literary talent.

(b) Novels and Short Stories

The most flourishing field of Bengali Literature was fiction—mostly novels and short stories—a study of which is essential

for an understanding of the intellectual trends of the day. The following are only a few of the numerous writers of fiction produced by East Pakistan:

1. *Shaukat Osman*: He has a distinguished place among the writers of fiction, and has portrayed social evils side by side with the cultural evolution in his novels and short stories. These include, "*Janu Apa*", and *Sabek Kahini* (both collection of short stories) and novels like *Bedi* and *Bani Adam*.

2. *Alauddin al-Azad*: He has won much praise for his skill and great acumen, as evident in the collection of stories like the *Mriganabhi*, *Dhan-Kannya*, *Annyamukh*, *Jege Achi*.

3. *Abu Rushd*: Well-known among the younger generation of writers, he is however, cut off from the people and his writings breathe the atmosphere of the city. The *Pratham Jauvan*, *Samne Natun Din* and *Elomelo* are some of his well-known works.

4. *Bulbul Choudhury* (1916—1953) : This accomplished dancer of international fame was born in Satkania village in Chittagong and died at a very early age in 1953. He also distinguished himself as a writer of novels and short stories. The *Prachi*, a novel by him, is a charming work.

5. *Nurunnahar*: She is equally admired for her poetry and short stories. Inclined to be romantic rather than philosophical, her writings are both pleasant and virile. The *Asar*, *Bobamati*, *Gharial*, *Fardamafik* are delightful stories from her pen.

6. *Syed Waliullah*: He has attracted notice as a writer of short stories, but has also written a famous novel, the *Lal Salu*.

7. *Akbar Hossain*: A novelist of proved skill, his *Ki Paini*, *Mohomukti* and *Abanchita*, show considerable mastery of the art of story-telling.

(c) Drama

The drama has already made its mark in East Pakistan and has an even better promise for future. Its limitations have been the absence of a permanent stage and professional actors. Nevertheless, the universities and amateur organisations are keeping it alive. Among the more successful dramatists appearing since Partition, may be named Shaukat Osman, Nurul Momen, Askar Ibne Shaikh, Nazir Ahmad, Akbaruddin, Ibrahim Khalil and Obaidul Huq. Shaukat Osman's *Tashkar-o-Lashkar*, *Amlar Mamla*, *Bagdader Kavi*, *Kankar Mani* are fine plays that were well received. Askar Ibne Shaikh's *Birodh*, *Padakhep* and *Bidrohi Padma* too are powerful creations; as also Nurul Momen's *Roopantar* and *Nemesis*. Their dialogues are full of wit and humour and perfect in their own ways. Akbaruddin's *Nadir Shah*, and *Ibrahim Khalil's Sakhina* and *Moosa* are lively plays on historical themes. Obaidul Huq's *Digbijoyee Chorakarvari* and *Ay Parkey* deal with the problems of modern life. Nazir Ahmad is another notable writer, also famous as a Film-producer and an art-critic.

(d) Essay and Journalism

There are a number of writers who specialize in essay and criticism, and the literature of East Pakistan has been greatly enriched by their works. It is not possible to mention more than a few names here. Abdullah al-Mufti and Abdul Jabbar

(whose latest books are, *Vishwa Rahashya Sandhane* and *Vishwa Rahashye Newton-o-Einstein*), have produced valuable scientific literature. Muhammad Abul Qasem, Muhammad Azraf and Abdul Ghafur have written commendable treatises on Islamic social system. Firdaus Khan and Sadruddin are noted for their critical writings on literary and educational subjects. Abdul Hai has published useful works on phonetics. Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, Syed Ali Ahsan, Ahmad Sharif, and Munir Chowdhury are distinguished literary critics.

Journalism is marked by greater activity and expansion. The *Monthly Mohammadi* and the *Saogat* formerly published from Calcutta have come over to Dacca. The *Dilruba*, the *Imroz* and the *Mah-e-Nau* started later are well-established journals. The *Azad*, the *Ittehad*, the *Millat* and other Bengali dailies, the *Kafela*, the *Juger Devi*, the *Sainik* and many other weeklies, are also appearing from Dacca.

(a) Some Veterans

There are some senior writers, who have survived from the pre-Independence period, and can be said to belong to two periods. Their contributions to literature have been rich and manifold.

1. *Abdul Ghafur Siddiqui*: An octogenerian, he is still writing, his most valuable works belong to the spheres of Punthi literature and historical research. His recently published *Vishad Sindhur Aitihasik Patabhumi* is a valuable work.

2. *Maulana Akram Khan*: The well-known politician, writer and journalist, will not be forgotten by Pakistan or West

Bengal, for his great services to journalism. Besides, his *Mustafa Charit* and *Amparar Tafsir* are invaluable additions to Islamic literature. *Samasya-o-Samadhan* is also a valuable book of religious interest.

3. *Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah*: Primarily a linguist, he has successfully weilded his pen in the spheres of translation, stories, research, criticism and history over the long years of his life, and made valuable contributions to literary history. His recent works, *Bangla Sahityer Katha* and *Vidyapati Natak* are of great value to literary scholars.

4. *Ebrahim Khan*: He has equal mastery of imaginative writing and travel-accounts. He first made his mark as a dramatist by publishing the *Kamal Pasha* and *Anwar Pasha* but has lately taken to the writing of fiction and travellogues. The *Kafela* is a comparatively recent drama by him. He also writes essays in a light, conversational style. His *Hirak Har* is a meritorious work.

5. *Muhammad Barkatullah*: He is primarily an essayist, and has an elegant style. His *Parasya Pratibha* is a work on Persian Literature. The *Manusher Dharma* is a philosophical work. Essays continue to flow from his pen.

6. *Begum Shamsunnahar*: She has a high place among the women prose-writers of East Pakistan, and had already brought out a few books before Independence which won her fame. She is now writing travel-accounts.

7. *Abul Fazal*: A novelist and story-writer of repute, he has also revealed his powers in drama and is the author of many

works. His story book *Ayesha* and the drama entitled *Quaid-i-Azam*, belong to the pre-Independence period. He is still an active writer. Among his novels *Chauchir* and *Jivan Pather Jatri* and among his dramas *Akti Sakal* and *Pragati*, are famous works.

8. *Abul Mansur Ahmad*: His writings are few but noted for satirical power. The *Aina* and *Food Conference* are amusing works of satire, to these he has recently added a novel, *Satyasatya*.

9. *Bande Ali*: A poet, novelist, and story-writer, he also writes for children and is quite prolific. His works include *Mainamatir Char* a book of poems, besides some novels.

10. *Qader Nawaz*: Famous as a poet, his *Maral* is an excellent work of poetry. His verse continues to appear in literary magazines and is deeply nationalist, holding high the ideals of Pakistan. His *Harano Toopi* is a poem of rare merit in Bengali, which Tagore himself chose for his anthology of selected verse.

11. *Abdul Qadir*: A poet, prosodist, critic and the editor of a monthly journal, his writings are characterised by a keen intellect. The *Dilruba* is a worthy book of verse. The *Kavya Malancha*, an anthology of poems edited by him, is rated high. Another anthology *Beethi*, recently edited by him, includes poems written on our freedom movement and the ideology of Pakistan. This work has afforded us a further insight into his critical ability. He continues to write poems and scholarly articles occasionally.

12. *Mahbubul Alam*: He is mainly a story-writer, who

has also written some novels, and taken a few excursions to the sphere of History. His *Momener Javanbandi* is an excellent literary work, being not strictly a novel but rather a biography. The *Mafizan* is a long story. *Tajia* and *Pacha Anna* are collections of poems. His *Paltan Jivaner Smriti* is an interesting story, and *Gomph Sandesh* an amusing satire. He has also written some books of history like *Barmar Hangama* and *Chatta Gramer Itihas*, and maintained his form as a writer of short stories.

In conclusion it may be observed that East Pakistan has certainly added to its literary achievement and distinction since Independence. As our Geography, national ideology and even language, are separate and distinct from those of West Bengal, our literature must be different in many respects and build up a new characteristic tradition in the future. Current developments already point in that direction. However, we must allow it some more time to grow and prove its possibilities. Perhaps another poet like Nazrul Islam may arise to give a new revolutionary turn to its development.